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The success which has hitherto attended the Publication has emboldened him to continue the Work; and he hopes that the patronage which has been bestowed on the First Volume, will be extended towards its successor.

EDINBURGH, *Aug.* 1845.

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SERMON I.

THE INCARNATION.

BY

ROBERT LEE, D.D.,
MINISTER OF OLD GREYFRIARS, EDINBURGH.

HEB. ii. 11-18.

"*For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the*

nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.[2]

THE general scope of this passage you will all apprehend to be this, that the children of Adam, being now all children of wrath, all needed a Saviour; and the Saviour they needed must not be in the form of God, or of an angel; he must be in the likeness of sinful flesh: whatever else he is, he must be *man*. Accordingly, Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who was God from eternity, became man, in the fullness of time. The *Word was made flesh;* he *took part of flesh and blood;* he *took on him the seed of Abraham;* he *was made in all things like unto his brethren.*

Concerning God, even the Father, we know something from other sources than Revelation. Nature and Providence declare his *eternal power and godhead;* whereas our acquaintance with *the Son of God* is derived from Revelation alone. But the Bible assures us that Jesus Christ is *God* — and it assures us also that he is *man;* and the assertion of his *godhead* is equally positive as that of his *manhood:* and those persons, in ancient times, who denied that Jesus was truly *man*, had quite as much reason to support them, as they have, who, in modern times, deny that he is truly *God:* that is, neither party had any reason at all,

except their own imagination, contradicted by all Scripture.

As we are told, *the Word* was made flesh—that the *divine*, and not any angelic nature, was incarnate; so, we may confidently infer, that the assumption of manhood by any inferior, or created spirit, would not have answered the mighty purposes of God's mercy in our redemption. For the divine wisdom will never employ a mightier agency than the occasion demands. On the other hand, if all the designs which the infinite wisdom contemplated in our redemption, could have been effectuated, without God being made man, we may rest assured that amazing humiliation would never have been submitted to, nor would *the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh*, ever have been revealed to the faith of Adam's sons.

As we may reasonably conclude, that the incarnation of the *divine* nature was necessary to the accomplishment of our eternal salvation, so the Scriptures assure us that conclusion is correct. For (not to allude to other passages at present,) the text affirms, not only that *he took on him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*, but it alleges a *necessity*, or *propriety*, in this arrangement. Ver. 17, *Wherefore it behove him* — whom? the same who is described before (i. 3.) *as the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his substance*—and whom the Father himself addresses, (ver. 8.) *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.* It *became*, it *behoved him*, the Son, the Word of God, the divine nature, and none else: for it never could

have behoved *him* peculiarly, if the same might have been accomplished by others—it behoved *him* to be made in all respects like his brethren, the sons of Adam and of Abraham, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest;—*merciful* to men, whose brother he was—faithful to God, as *his* Son. The text, then, intimates, by no means obscurely, what the person of our Redeemer must be. He must be *God*, but God made flesh; divine, but divinity incarnate; the divine glory, the Sheckinah from the sanctuary in heaven, but enshrined in the body of a man—the Word made flesh, and *dwelling in that tabernacle among us.*

Having thus stated the necessity, as this is evidently asserted in the Word of God, that our Saviour should unite in his person the nature of God and the nature of man, I would proceed, Secondly, to inquire, *Wherein that necessity consisted?*—Why was this necessary? Why might not God have made by miracle some sinless man, that *he* might have redeemed us? or why might not some mighty angel have redeemed us? or why might not God himself have saved us, without the wonderful expedient of the incarnation?

I do not propose to inquire into the propriety of this dispensation, *as it regards the divine nature or the divine government.* We are, indeed, assured of the fact, that the incarnation of the divinity, and the atonement made by the God-man, *were* requisite, in order that the expression of mercy to sinners might not be inconsistent with the glorious character, which unites perfect holiness and rectitude with boundless love and compassion. And we are not left to doubt, that the divine

government (no less than the divine nature) demanded the incarnation and the sacrifice of the Son of God. For when we are told that Christ suffered for us, *that God might be just when he justifies the ungodly who believeth in Jesus*, we are distinctly given to understand, that, unless Christ had suffered in our nature, God could not have justified the ungodly, or, if he had done so, justice would have been infringed. But with this simple statement of the fact, that, in relation to the nature and government of God, the incarnation of the Word was required in order to our salvation, we should rest satisfied. For though men have written and spoken immensely on this subject, God has spoken to us almost nothing regarding it, except to assert the fact. And they who have most confidently dogmatized on it, have only made it darker by their explanations, and have raised more doubts and greater than they solved. For we cannot comprehend this aspect of the incarnation, unless we could fathom the depth of the divine nature, and survey the length and breadth of the divine government, both of which are infinite. No; in this case, as in that of the Trinity, and all such doctrines, it is our business not to *speculate*, but *believe*—to apply not imagination, but faith. God reveals these things to us only as far as our present necessities require; and further, with certainty of truth, we cannot go.

But, as regards *ourselves*, and their bearing *on our interests*, our Father in heaven is as liberal in his communications, as he is reserved in the other case. And I propose at present to suggest a few of the reasons

which make it apparent, that, in order to perform the part of a Saviour *to us*, it behoved Christ, the Son of God, to take on him the nature of man.

What are our wants, our miseries, as sinners? We have broken the divine law; and of course we are condemned. We need, therefore, pardon or justification. This can be obtained only by *a sacrifice*. Therefore, we need a priest who may offer the sacrifice and reconcile us. This is our first want. Then, we are very weak; we need support. We are very stubborn; and therefore we need to have our hard hearts broken. We cannot regulate our actions; therefore, we need *a law* and a lawgiver: and we are exposed to powerful enemies, from whom, unless protected, we perish; and for all these reasons, it is manifest we need one who has the authority and power *of a King*. This is our second want. And yet further, we are most ignorant of that which we are infinitely concerned to know, which we are most unwilling to learn, and most ready to forget; which needs to be demonstrated to us, and impressed upon us with the most striking evidence; and so Christ supplies our third want—he is *our Prophet*. What is necessary to be shown is, that our Redeemer must be both *divine* and *human*, otherwise he could not discharge any one of these three offices.

It was needful that, in order to be a Priest, our Redeemer should be both God and man. In other words, he who was merely God, could not be our Priest, neither one who was merely man. If the Word had not become man, he could not have died—he could not have

suffered—he could not have offered up a sacrifice, nor made expiation. A priest implies a sacrifice, as a father implies a child, a master a servant, a governor subjects. If he were a priest, he must have a sacrifice to offer. Wherefore he took human nature, and made it part of himself, that he might have something to offer up to God. We need to advert here to two distinct and important considerations:—1*st*, *The essence of a sacrifice, a real sacrifice, is obedience, contrary to the natural inclination or will of that which is sacrificed.* The divine nature of the Son could not be a sacrifice to God, having the very will of God itself. But every man has that distinct will which is of the essence of freedom and responsibility. The man Jesus had that will. As a man, Christ was capable of obedience and of sacrifice, of which, unless he had laid aside the form of God, he could not be. The reason why the bulls and goats, which the sons of Aaron offered continually, were not pleasing to God, or profitable to men, except for exhibition and instruction, was, that those creatures had no reasonable will, and they were slain contrary to that will they had. But when the only begotten Son cometh into the world, he saith, *sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offerings for sin,* such as those presented by the law, *thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein.* For *the doing of his will,* which the bulls and goats could not do, is the sacrifice with which God is truly pleased. But Christ our Priest came clothed with our nature, that he, being both possessed of a reasonable will, and rendered capable of obedience and suffering, might offer that sacrifice; for,

Then, said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God! He taketh away the first, the animal sacrifice, *that he may establish the second,* the spiritual, the doing of God's holy will; *by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all.* Our Lord expressed the very essence of his sacrifice when he said, *Not my will but thine be done.* Such language could not be used by the Son, till he took on him the likeness of sinful flesh; or if before, prophetically: for till then he had no will distinct from the divine; and this never could be sacrificed to itself, because it could never be contrary to, or inconsistent with itself. *2dly,* It is impossible those sufferings he needed to endure that he might make his soul an offering for sin, should have been inflicted on our Priest, had he appeared to the world in the form of God. For, not to mention that death was only one, though the last step in that ladder of humiliation by which Christ descended the unimaginable distance from the bosom of God to the darkness of that sepulchre in which his visible humiliation ended; we may ask, Who would have presumed, who would have dared to malign, to reproach, to persecute, much less to seize, condemn, torture, and crucify one, who appeared with the visible attributes and glory of the Most High? Fear would have made every tongue falter; fear would have paralized every hand; every heart would have quaked, and every countenance have gathered blackness; and all the world, when it saw his face as the sun shineth in his strength, and heard his voice as of many waters, would have fallen at his feet as dead. There had been none to cry, *Not this man,*

but Barabbas: Away with him: Let him be crucified. Every mouth would have been shut, and all the world guilty before him; or if any voice was heard, it would be the voice of despair, deprecating punishment.

But that he might suffer from man whatever was necessary for man's redemption, he hid himself under their own form, so that nothing of God might be visible but this moral glory, his holiness, his power, his rectitude, his unspeakable love, his unfathomable mercy: and men dared to inflict upon the Son of God so disguised, whatever the divine government and their eternal salvation required.

Our Priest, then, must be *man*. That he must be *God*, is too plain to need proof. A divine sufferer alone could be a worthy sacrifice for the sins of the world. *His* sufferings alone can have that dignity and worth in the eye of God, and that impressiveness in the eyes of men, which can qualify them to answer the ends of atonement, whether as regards the government of the Almighty, or the moral impression to be produced on our minds. Besides, we never can learn *God's* love from the sufferings for us of any one that is not God. We reason that *God hath loved us*, from the fact that *he hath given himself for us*.

And now, O sinners, this wonderful person is your *Priest*. The God-man made atonement, the God-man maketh intercession for you. Cling to his sacrifice; accept his mediation; plead his obedience with the Father. For he is able to save you to the uttermost, and all that come unto God by him; for he

ever liveth to make intercession for you. And, sprinkled with the blood of his sacrifice, you shall not come into condemnation; but rather may boldly ask, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; it is Christ that died, and rose, and reigns at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But, Secondly, because we are weak and wayward, and exposed to many foes, and powerful, therefore, we need *a King*. And none can be such a king as we need, but one who is both *God and man*. When our race became apostate, the Father held no more intercourse with us directly: *The Word* assumed the office of Ruler of men; for the human eye could no longer look on God; the human ear could no longer hear his voice, but trembling it fled and sought to hide itself. The voice of man's guilt cried, like the Israelites, *Give us a king that he may rule over us, and let him speak, but do not thou speak to us, lest we die.* And so, the Son of God, who was to become man in due time, and has at length become our brother actually, and was always our brother by anticipation, *he* has ever from the first been *the King of men*. Almighty is his power, infinite his knowledge and wisdom, immeasurable his love, unfailing his rectitude; and he is *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*. He has always made the law for men, who himself *is man*, and has himself fulfilled the law he made. He legislates for *his brethren*, and rules his brethren, and he executes in regard to his brethren that law which he made for

them. *The Father hath given him to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Therefore the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* Foreigners and aliens are commonly regarded by nations as questionable rulers: and we, so suspicious are we rendered by sin, might regard a superior nature (even though that nature were divine) with distrust, as if less sensibly alive to them, and less prepared to sympathize with those infirmities in which itself did not participate. But now all judgment is committed to him *who is the Son of man*, that every suspicion on our part may be removed; and, *because as he was, so are we in this world*, we might have confidence before him in the day of judgment.

And now, ye followers of Jesus, what defence, what support, what guidance can ye need, which this your king, who is God Almighty, cannot afford you—which this your ruler, who is love, will not supply? In all your frailties and ignorances and temptations manifold, remember that He your Divine Sovereign is man, and has suffered being tempted, and is qualified to succour you when ye are tempted. Be not startled by dangers, nor scared by enemies; neither faint ye at the thought of your own weakness, and the power of the devil, and his cunning, and the cruel malice of his servants. Let the almightiness and infinite love of your most gracious King, God's son, your brother, assure your hearts, that following him, ye shall be conquerors, yea more than conquerors.

It was necessary that our *Prophet*, he who should effectually teach us, should be not simply God, or mere

man, but both: and none could so teach us who was not both God and man.

It is a gross mistake to suppose that what mankind needed most was knowledge of good and evil; or that the possession of this knowledge, in even the highest perfection, is sufficient of itself to subdue the heart to the obedience and love of God. The Jews possessed this knowledge as much as we do. The two great commandments are written as distinctly in the law as in the Gospel. The outlines of duty were traced for them as clearly as they are for us. But to how little purpose, their history teaches too plainly. Even regarding the heathens themselves, I will make bold to affirm, there is scarcely a duty or rule of morality, laid down in the New Testament, but may be found expressed, with more or less clearness, in the writings of some one or more of their poets or philosophers. What, then, did they need? They needed this, to be shown and convinced that goodness was not impossible. An actual instance of its practicability they had never witnessed; for teachers of virtue they had enough, but almost none who even pretended to exhibit what they taught. They saw righteousness as in the height of heaven, and they acknowledged its lovliness. They mined for it, as in the depths, and they confessed it was precious; but, in despair, they cried, Who shall ascend to the heavens to bring it down? who shall descend to the depth to bring it up, that we may do it? It was not necessary, therefore, that another temple of God should be reared of stones, or that, from that dead temple, the same dead law, the mere letter of outward

and verbal instruction, should be promulgated. But, as one of the Fathers of the Church has written,* when righteousness had grown a stranger upon earth, then God sent that Teacher, his Son, who should found a new, *a living temple*, of which he was the foundation; and should be himself *a living law*, not only informing men, but *showing* them, in his own life, what they should be; and overturning the notion that what he enjoined was impossible, by the undeniable performance of it by himself in their own nature.

He is an *effectual Teacher*, for he has power not only himself to work the works of God, but to communicate that to others whereby they also may work them. And whereas the light of Moses' law was the death of men; for it showed them their condemnation and their misery, and thus it resembled a conflagration at midnight, which gives light to the wretch frightened out of his slumbers, but light only to discover that he is just about to be consumed: our divine Prophet lays down the law, and performs it; gives the letter and the spirit; the rule, and the will and power to adhere to it. His instruction is quickening and saving: he is the true light, for it is light which *is the life of men*.

A perfect teacher of righteousness could neither be mere man, nor in the form of God. A mere man could not, as is evident from two plain reasons. He could not exemplify his own precepts—he could not prove that obedience was possible. And if he pretended it was, his disciples had a right to demand, *If it be possible, show*

* Lactantii Instit. l. iv. 24.

us the proof of it in thine own person. Subdue in thyself those passions which thou enjoinest us to conquer; if not, what presumption to set us on an enterprise which thou thyself canst neither perform, nor prove to be practicable. No moral teacher either can or ought to have authority, who does not exemplify his own teaching. Another reason which renders it impossible a mere man could be such a teacher as we need is this, that he could not give the Spirit; for the Spirit is God; and how could a man, a creature, communicate God the Creator! And yet, without the Spirit of God, no man can be taught of God.

And now, let us suppose that Christ the Prophet of the Church, had delivered his teaching to us in the form of God, that he taught us without being incarnate: Might not the human heart have raised these plausible objections? "Thou commandest me to keep thy law, but thou art God, and I am dust and ashes. Thou dost promise me the aid of thy Spirit; but I have not seen or heard of any one in whom, by that aid, this end was accomplished. Thou commandest me to look through death, and see the prospect of endless life; but I have not seen any member of my father's condemned family pass through that dark passage into the light of eternal day. Thou, indeed, offerest the divine promise for my assurance, and the divine character for my imitation; but this gives me no encouragement where I need it most. For God, whose name be blessed forever, is Lord, and cannot be subject as I am: He is Almighty, and is therefore superior to the fears by which I am oppressed. He sits upon the throne of

his holiness, and cannot be tempted of evil: How therefore can he afford an example to me in my manifold temptations? Can I learn patience from him that can neither suffer nor be injured; or resolution to meet and struggle with the last enemy, from the immortal God? True, I perceive in him the glorious attributes of a Lord, a Master, a Lawgiver, a Judge; but I am a subject, a servant, a creature clothed and struggling with flesh, with the temptations of the devil, with the apprehensions of suffering, and the fears of death; and, in these circumstances, the character of God, though infinitely perfect, is not an example which applies to my case."

To prevent this murmur, and the reasons on which it might have rested, God became man, and, as man spoke to men from the same level on which they stood. We saw him in humiliation, in subjection, in sorrow, in pain; in the miseries of life, in the struggles of temptation, in the fears and agonies of death, "ever in the battle, but ever aloft;" and then finally victorious, when he seemed for ever vanquished, for, by yielding to death he conquered him and his ruler, in the irresistible might of weakness quelling all the powers of hell.

This is our Redeemer, this our Saviour. This is he announced from of old, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This is the hope of the first transgressors; this, the King whom the Church always acknowledged; this is our God, we have waited for him — the consolation of Israel, the Prince of all the kings of the earth. This is he whom all types prefigured; all sacrifices from him derived their meaning and effi-

cacy; all the prophets spake of him; all the priests foreshadowed him; all the kings represented him. The tabernacle and the temple were the emblems of his human nature; and the divine glory resting therein, was the symbol of his Godhead dwelling in flesh; and whatever was done in the tabernacle was the foreshadow of what he should do in his sublime and glolious ministry, whereby he hath reconciled all things in heaven and earth.

How wonderful, how glorious his person; uniting the majesty of the eternal God with the meanness of mortal man; qualified to do whatever was necessary to be done, to suffer whatever needed to be endured for the honour of God and the salvation of man! How mysterious his condescention, how sublime his humility—the pure streams of his mercy overflowing the world, while the flames of his zeal consumed himself.

This is he in whose blood we have remission of our sins; by whose Spirit we have knowledge, and love, and hope, and consolation, and power; under whose kingdom we have protection, and peace, and joy, and the victory over the world. This is the conqueror of death, who says, *Because I live, ye shall live also;* and who, having led us through the black domains of that tremendous king, will place us where his rule and his name shall be unknown.

And now to God the Father who hath loved us: and to the Son of God who gave himself for us: and to the Holy Ghost the Comforter, be honour and glory everlasting. Amen.

SERMON II.

THE VISION SPEAKING, BEING A SEQUEL TO THE "VISION WRITTEN."*

BY

DAVID ARNOT, D.D.,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

EZRA IX. 13, 14.

"*And after all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this: should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?*"

THIS passage contains three obvious points, to which we would at this time, with the Divine assistance and blessing, direct your attention. The first of

* A Discourse from Habak. ii. 1—3.

these points is, that JUDGMENTS ARE SENT AS THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN: "after all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass."

We require merely to direct your attention to the statements of the Word of God in reference to this assertion. From Genesis to the Revelation, the unvarying testimony of the Spirit is, "the wages of sin is death." Transgression and punishment were closely united in the first solemn but gracious warning addressed by the Creator to Adam; "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Not less closely associated do they appear in the reason assigned to Noah by Jehovah, for the destruction of the world by a flood; "the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and behold I will destroy them with the earth." The same reason was stated to Abraham for the destruction of the cities of the plain: "the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down." Throughout the entire history of Israel, this fact was continually brought out into distinct recognition. "They dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgment, *therefore* thou gavest them up into the hand of the people of the lands." The punishments are invariably represented as connected with sin; they were threatened before they were sent, and were afterwards referred to as evidence of the truth of other denunciations of punishment which should be carried into effect as certainly as the former, if the guilty people did not repent and turn from their iniquity. Such visitations in Providence

were sent for the purpose of asserting the holiness and supremacy of God's moral government, of striking terror into the enemies of his people, of assuring the hearts of his own servants, and of indicating a future state of rewards and punishments. "I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord." "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness." "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous: for the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

But it is not merely on the ungodly world that the Almighty sends judgments on account of crying sins. The Lord has said, "if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." Nay, it often happens that God's people have "evil things" in this life, while the wicked enjoy unmolested their "good things." Asaph says, "the wicked are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Verily I have cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency in vain; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Israel was God's covenanted people; and yet you know His hand was often stretched out with the rod to chastise them on account of their waywardness and rebellion. Indeed, as the sins of God's children are of an heinous and aggravated character, their punishment, though sent in mercy, is frequently

of a very marked and severe description. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still."

The particular sin, or "great trespass," here charged upon the Jews, is *joining in affinity with the heathen.* This is stated at the second verse of the chapter: "for they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." Intermarrying with the heathen was a violation of an express command: "thou shalt make no covenant with them, neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son; nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." The Jews perhaps had taken wives from among the heathen, either before they came out of Babylon, or after they were settled in Judea. This was in itself criminal and highly displeasing to God, and it was ruinous in its consequences. When Moses gave the law against intermingling with the nations, he said, "for they will turn away thy sons from following me, that they may serve other gods, so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." The infamous and fatal counsel of Balaam to Balak, was to seduce Israel into alliances with the Moabites. And it is recorded of Solomon, "when he was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was

the heart of David his father." The descendants of Abraham, in consequence of the covenant made with him, were accounted holy—separated from "all families of the earth"—dedicated to the Lord, and taken under the divine protection. Whatever, therefore, tended to lead them into idolatry was to be regarded as an evil of the deadliest character, and directly opposed to their happiness, as it led to a violation of the gracious covenant into which God had entered with them to do them good, while they continued steadfast therein: and as nothing tended so powerfully to draw away their hearts as this forbidden affinity with the heathen, it might well be termed their "great trespass," and as such might justly be considered deserving of severe punishment.

In the text, Ezra acknowledges that punishment had come upon his people for their "evil deeds and their great trespass." So greatly was his righteous spirit vexed upon the knowledge of their iniquities, that "he rent his garment and his mantle, and plucked off the hair of his head, and of his beard, and sat down astonied until the evening sacrifice." He knew that though God was slow to anger, yet he was a "jealous God," and would chasten in his hot displeasure all who sinned with so high a hand against him. He acknowledges the justice of all the punishments that had befallen them in former times, and attributes them all to their sins. "Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day, and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the

sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day."

And, brethren, the confession of Ezra should be ours. We should remember that judgments come upon us as the punishment of sin. We should trace all our evils and calamities up to their true source—sin; itself the most dreadful of all evils: sin, which is every day continuing its ravages upon the peace of individuals and of families, of communities and of nations; darkening the world with error, superstition and idolatry, and blasting it with depravity and crime; defacing the image of an holy God from the souls of men; severing them from the favour of their Maker; destroying their hopes of blessedness in heaven, and fitting them to become denizens of the pit of Tophet. And, if we would estimate aright the punishment due to sin, let us look at the cross of Calvary. Nothing save the infinitely valuable sacrifice of the Eternal Son of God could magnify the divine law and make it honourable, and bring in an everlasting righteousness for man. Great indeed is the mystery of godliness, and incomprehensible by men or angels: but from the simple fact, that after enduring unutterable agony, Jesus died for sin; that God hid his face for a time from his well-beloved Son, who in that hour felt within his own spotless and holy soul, the outpoured vials of Divine wrath; from this we are taught to regard sin as something, the evil of which we shall never be able completely to understand, even as we cannot understand the greatness of that love which appointed the sacrifice. "And if he that despised Moses' law, died

without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord: and again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II. The second point to be noticed is, that DIVINE JUDGMENTS ARE MINGLED WITH MERCY: "our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve."

Israel had been carried away captive into a strange land, and kept in bondage for seventy years. This was their mournful plaint: "by the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land!" But the Almighty neither utterly destroyed them all, nor suffered them to remain in captivity for ever. Deliverance was wrought for them, chiefly through Ezra, "according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him," and they were restored to the land of their fathers, and to their dearly loved Zion, where they could in peace resume their harps and sing the Lord's song. And when Ezra viewed this deliverance in connection with

the subsequent backslidings of his infatuated countrymen, he could not but recognise an aggravation of their sins, and an amplification of God's mercy, and he could not but express his deep sense of the divine forbearance and compassion.

This acknowledgment was also made by Nehemiah, who, after recounting all God's dealings with his people, and their repeated apostacies, says, "nevertheless for thy great mercy's sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God." In the same spirit of grateful humility Jeremiah says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" The Psalmist sings in a similar strain: "I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." "He hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "Many times did he deliver them: but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry: and he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies."

In no case can a living man justly complain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Were we to be punished according to the full measure of our deservings, we should be "brought into desolation in a moment, and utterly consumed with terrors." "Every

sin deserveth the wrath and curse of God, both in this life and that which is to come;" "and who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell in everlasting burnings?" Sinners live under a respite: they drink not now of the unmingled cup of astonishment and wrath; their punishment is intended to alarm, not to crush them. In the time of trouble, when the hand of God lies heavy upon them, men are apt to cry out, as if there was no sorrow like unto their sorrow. But if you will only look around, you will discover others who have been more severely dealt with; and if you will only reflect, you will find that there were many ingredients in the cup which was given you that tended to allay its bitterness. While there is life there is hope; and while there is hope there is mercy. You may have lost a part of your worldly possessions; but your bread has been given you, and your water has been sure. You may have been sorely bowed down by disease; but "the silver cord has not been loosed, your dust has not returned to the earth as it was, nor your spirit unto God who gave it." You may have lost some members of your family, and the "desire of your eyes may have been taken away from you with a stroke;" but others, who are near and dear to you, are left. Repress, then, every rising emotion of discontent and repining. You "suffer justly, for you receive the due reward of your deeds:" mourn therefore for them, but murmur not that you are reminded how evil and bitter your sins are, by the hand of punishment. Nothing was ever so bad that might not have been worse. It is only

when sinners shall "lift up their eyes, being in torments," and perceive the blessed in their mansions of glory, with the impassable gulf betwixt them, that they shall experience "judgment without mercy."

III. The third point to which we would direct attention is, THE DANGER OF DISREGARDING DIVINE JUDGMENTS: "should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?"

The history of the Jews is a dark narrative of mercies and ingratitude; exhortations and disobedience; warnings and neglect; judgments and impenitence; judicial blindness and total rejection. Their God "did marvellous things in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through. In the daytime he led them with a cloud; and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink. And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble."

In later times God "sent unto them all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, O, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their

wickedness." How fiery is the threatening by Ezekiel! "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it, it shall come to pass, and I will do it, I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent." How tender the lamentation of Jeremiah over the desolations that had come upon his people in his own day! "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned!" And how inexpressibly pathetic are the meltings of compassion poured forth from the heart of the blessed Jesus! "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate." And now the Jews are an astonishment, and a hissing, a reproach, a proverb, a taunt, and a curse, in all places whether they have been driven.

You know, my brethren, that God's dealings with Israel were typical of his dealings with the Church at large, and with its individual members. Religious privileges are sometimes long continued to a Church; but when it proves unfruitful, then is fulfilled the saying, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

The Churches at Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea have perished. The candlestick has been removed out of its place. The Spirit strives long with the disobedient; but there is a time when he ceases. Invitations, warnings, and judgments are employed for a certain period, to arouse and save sinners; but that period is limited. Even in this life some are consumed with terrors, and driven to distraction under the torturing agonies of a conscience which has ceased to remonstrate, and begun to upbraid. There are some who are made to experience an earnest of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. They know that the anger is kindled against them which will burn like a devouring fire, and that there is no peace to them in time or in eternity.

There are others, however, who have no bands in their death: their strength is firm to the last. But after death comes the judgment, and then they are loaded with everlasting chains. They may die peaceably; but they will instantly lift up their eyes, being in torments. They may enjoy their good things in this life, while the good have their evil things; but this will only heighten the contrast hereafter, and aggravate their despair. Their desolation will come upon them suddenly and unexpectedly. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Sinners are happy in the midst of visitations and warnings, only because they keep themselves blindfolded and

deaf. Theirs is the joy of the beasts that perish; the illusory bliss of a dreaming man; and they have only to awake, as one day they must awake, from their dream of perdition, to find the illusion gone, and its baseless fabric melted into air. There is no peace to them in those dreary mansions to which they are hastening.

Let us now endeavour, in the spirit of self-application, to draw from this subject instruction and improvement to ourselves.

We have seen that the great trespass of which the Jews were guilty was their joining in affinity with the heathen around them. Now, the inquiry naturally presents itself, what sin, if any, similar to the trespass of Israel, may professing Christians be guilty of? If we bear in mind the reason assigned by Moses, why the Jews were forbidden to join in affinity with the nations, we shall be enabled to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

As the covenanted people of God, the Jews were solemnly bound to renounce all idolatry, and all familiar intercourse with idolaters, lest thereby they should be turned away to serve other gods. As Christians are God's covenanted people now, they are under similar obligations to renounce the world, and all familiar intercourse with those whose character and conduct might prove to them a snare to beguile them into sin. If this is granted, then it is obvious that on our part, as disciples of Christ, a sin similar to that of the Jews "great trespass" will be, our mixing freely, and entering into intimate friendships, with the men of the

world. Such familiar association must have a pernicious effect upon ourselves, and, through us, must be highly dishonouring to the holy name by which we are called. St. Paul thus exhorts the Corinthians: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." You will observe that the Apostle assigns a similar reason with Moses for their not being unequally yoked together. The union in itself is incongruous and monstrous. It is an attempt to mingle light and darkness, holiness and sin, and to make an agreement betwixt Christ and Belial. The Apostle therefore says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," even as Moses, in like manner had said, "Take heed with thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee."

There is an essential and irreconcileable difference betwixt nature and grace—the flesh and the spirit. And in so far as these principles predominate in the soul, there must exist a similar difference between those who are the subjects of them. The spirit of the world,

from the very beginning, was opposed to the spirit of truth and godliness. The children of that old serpent the devil, have ever shown themselves the bitter enemies of the seed of the woman, and of all in whom the divine image can be traced. The children of darkness cannot be supposed susceptible of sympathy with the children of light. The Redeemer spoke of his own in these terms:—"I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The principles of the world and the principles of the church can never coalesce, for there is no affinity between them. If we love the world, the love of the Father cannot dwell in us. And if we are truly the disciples of Jesus, we cannot, without a gross violation of consistency, without a sad dereliction of principle, without the traitor's guilt, join in affinity, and hold familiar fellowship with those who are none of his—the enemies of the cross of Christ.

In almost every similitude employed in the Word of God to characterise the situation and deportment of believers, we find something bearing a pointed allusion to this matter. They are called a "little flock," separated from the worldly herd of sinners; "brethren," living together in the same family; "a garden inclosed;" a "lily among thorns;" "hidden ones;" "a peculiar people;" "the light of the world," shining amid the surrounding darkness. The Christian is represented as a "soldier," enlisted under the banner of the "Captain of his salvation," and who obviously cannot discharge his duty if he consort with his Master's enemies, or if

he "entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." He is a pilgrim, who has bidden adieu to all the friends and follies of his youth, and who has set out, it may be, alone on his wilderness-path. In all these figures, the idea of separation from the world is clearly implied, and in many of them is also implied the idea of union and sympathy among believers themselves. And this just leads us back to the position in which the Jews were placed, and discovers to us the reason why they were prohibited from joining in affinity with the people of the land.

Now, my brethren, have we as a Church of Christ, and as individual members of his spiritual body, not fallen into the "great trespass?" Are we not habitually guilty of mingling amid all classes of society, as if we could sympathise with them in their feelings, and countenance them in their pursuits? Would the world be justified by appearances in saying of any great number of us, these are Christians; they are not of us; they walk by faith and not by sight? Can it be affirmed of many of us, that the world hates us, not because we willingly give offence, but because the holiness of our character is felt by them as the severest rebuke upon their ungodliness, the most intolerable light that can pierce the darkness in which they love to dwell? Is the testimony borne by us as witnesses for Christ so clear, and explicit, and uniform, that the world is in no way perplexed in its examination? Alas! brethren, if we are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, we shall be found wanting. The Church and the world, though essentially distinct, have been mingled in the

characters of those of whom they are composed, so that it has become well nigh impossible to separate and define them. The professing followers of the Lamb have so joined themselves in affinity with the offspring of the devouring lion, that it would seem the fold of Christ might also be the "synagogue of Satan." And thus "the love of many has waxed cold," spirituality of worship has vanished, self-denial, mortification, and deadness to the world, are known only by the names. The virtue and the fragrance of the holy anointing oil that flows down from the spiritual Aaron, and the quiet refreshing dews of divine grace and love have in a great measure passed away.

Christians, no doubt, are seen joining themselves in affinity with each other. But is it not to be feared that in many instances the bond of union is natural and of the flesh, and not scriptural and spiritual? Union proceeding from the spirit of party only tends to divide the body of Christ. Such an affinity is formed on the very principles that regulate the leagues of worldly men. It is not of the Spirit. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" Such unions are only Satan's imitation of the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The affinity that ought to subsist among Christians arises not from a principle of natural affection, however refined and tender, but from a holy and divine principle implanted by Him whose name is "Love." The unity of Christians is a plant of "our heavenly Father's planting." It is nou-

rished not by worldly motives or party considerations, but by the dews of celestial grace, descending in the rich communications of the Holy Spirit. It is divine love to our brethren of every denomination who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth. All who bear the image of Christ, and whose conduct agrees with the marks and evidences fixed in the Word of God as the index of the renewed nature within, will be cordially loved by the children of God.

But while we must lament the absence of general Christian unity and agreement, we must also lament the prevalence of unholy affinities between the Church and the world. This must surely be displeasing to Him who thus prayed for his people:—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How can the oneness of Christ's people with himself be made apparent, if they live in concord with an ungodly world! So long as this practice continues, the purpose of our existence as a Church must be frustrated; and we cannot expect the approbation of our glorified Head. And may not "the Amen, the faithful and true witness," say to us, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: (I would thou wert cold or hot,) so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." May we not expect judgments? May we not fear that the Lord will be angry with us, till he have consumed us? May we not dread final rejection?

My friends, I cannot too strongly impress upon your minds this great truth, that the office of the Church is to be a witness for Christ to the world; to exhibit his purity, holiness, and love, that the world may know to whom they belong. The great design of the unity for which the Redeemer prayed to his Father, was to convince the world of the divinity of his mission. But how was the world to know that believers were one with Christ? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another." Nothing can be clearer than this, that so soon as a church begins to depart from unity and brotherly love, she begins to forfeit her title to the name of a Church, however sound her creed, and scriptural her form of government, and however venerable the epithets which we are accustomed to bestow upon her. A Church without love, is like an altar bearing the sacrifice which no fire has come down to consume. We may dignify it with the appellation of a national Zion; but it is Zion parched and burnt up with the heat of party zeal: uncooled, unrefreshed, unfertilized by the dewy influences of the Spirit of love. We may delude ourselves with talking of its apostolicity, and its conformity to the purest models of the early ages of Christianity: but where is the holy anointing oil, without the sanctifying influence of which we cannot minister with acceptance before

the Lord, and cannot fulfil the functions which were solemnly allotted by the Saviour himself to the church, as the chief end of its institution. Divine love is the distinguishing mark and badge of the true Church of Christ. All other marks are only traditions and commandments of men, by which we are in danger of making void the commandment of God, and of fixing a standard which He has not fixed, by which to ascertain if we have in us the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus. It was said of the first Christians, "behold, how they love one another." They were true and faithful witnesses for Christ. The anointing which they had received of the Spirit, had not yet lost its fragrance. The heat of contention had not yet exhaled the divine dew that lay upon their souls. But, alas! how soon was the Church's first love left and forgotten: and how feebly and seldom has it been revived down to the present day. Periods, no doubt there have been, when the windows of heaven have been opened, and showers have fallen to refresh the Lord's heritage; periods when the Church remembered her high and holy calling, and being knit together in love, bore witness to the loving-kindness which dwells in the exalted Head, and to the holiness and power of that Spirit of promise who dwells in the heart of believers; periods when God looked down from heaven and beheld and visited his vine, and the vineyard which his right hand had planted, and the branch which He made strong for himself. But at no period has the Church been united in brotherly love, as it ought to have been as a witness for Christ to the world, and as

it will be when the prayer of the Redeemer shall have been fully answered, and all his people shall be one in him, as he is one with the Father.

The separation from the world to which we exhort the people of God, is not the supercilious distance of the haughty pharisee. Isaiah speaks of a people which say, "stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou:" but what is said of them? "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." Neither is it a superstitious seclusion from society to which we exhort you. The duties and the business of active life must be attended to. The interchanges of civility and kindness must not be neglected. Our Lord and his Apostles have left us an example for the regulation of our conduct in this matter, and we should walk in their steps. Paul says, "ye must needs go out of the world," if ye would altogether avoid the company of the ungodly.

But, my brethren, there is a separation which, as the avowed friends of the Redeemer, we must maintain, even at the risk of being called hypocritical and superstitious. Go ye and learn what that saying of Christ meaneth, "he that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me!" Of Levi of old it was said, "let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove;—who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknow-

ledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." It is no doubt a severe trial to which the Christian is exposed—but if he shrink from it, he will cease to deserve the name. He must come out of every society, he must be separate from every association, where his consistency may be compromised, where his character may be suspected, where his personal piety may be invaded, and his conscience blunted. This, to many, may prove a heavy trial:—but it is only the trial of their faith. Abraham was called on to surrender his beloved, his only son Isaac; and "he stretched forth his hand and took the knife." And our Saviour candidly forewarned all his people of the consequences of separating themselves from the world, forsaking all, and following him: "think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." But when the call, "follow me," comes with power to the soul, then the man arises and complies. He hears Christ in the way of duty: he is deaf to the solicitations of friendship and of sense. He appropriates the language of the Psalmist, "depart from me ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

It is painful to come out and be separate from those who are near and dear to us; and Satan, taking advantage of this, whispers that it is unnecessary, unnatural, barbarous. To be beloved by all, is held out as the noblest object of ambition. This is the voice of Satan. But hear the voice of Christ:—"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets. Blessed are ye when men shall

hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." If you have "an ear to hear," you will listen to the voice of the "Good Shepherd," and you will resolve, that whatever courses may be followed by a wicked and perverse generation, "as for you and your house you will serve the Lord."

But if you "again break God's commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations;" if you despise the goodness of God, "who hath punished you less than your iniquities deserve;" if you forget "all that has come upon you for your evil deeds, and for your great trespass;" if you disregard "the vision that has been made plain upon tables, so that he may run that readeth it;" then, brethren, what can await you? God will either send more judgments to awaken us; or, more fearful still—there will be silence, blindness, hardness of heart, judicial infatuation. Over us, as a Church, will be found this inscription, "He is joined to his idols—LET HIM ALONE!" Jehovah said of his people under the old covenant, "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me: so I gave them up unto their own heart's lust; and they walked in their own counsel." As a community we never were riper than we are at this day, either for an abundant outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and for a signal reviving of the work of the Lord; or for for-

mality, deadness, infatuation, and wrath. The blindest amongst us may now see elements at work which must inevitably prove either "the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death." God is "sitting as a refiner" in the midst of us; and "the day will declare" which of us stood the trial, and came forth refined gold, or were cast away as "reprobate silver."

SERMON III.

THE DISEASE, AND THE REMEDY.

BY THE

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"*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*"

We are either saved or not saved. We are at this moment either at enmity to God, or in friendship with Him; "children of the devil," or "children of God;" justified, or in a state of condemnation; dead in trespasses and sins, or alive unto God; in one word, we are either *saved* from the guilt and from the dominion of sin, or saved from neither. There is no neutral ground between these two kingdoms of light and darkness, blessing and curse, which a man can occupy. It is

quite true, that not until after the last judgment is the whole man, body and soul, completely destroyed or completely saved, so that the unbeliever has unmixed wickedness and misery awarded to him, and the believer unmixed holiness and happiness; but still it is here we must be translated from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ, or remain Satan's subject. It is here we must be pardoned and reconciled to God, or remain condemned. It is here we must be born again and made holy, or remain under the power of an evil heart. It is here we must be "saved" or "not saved." "He that believeth not," says Christ, is "*condemned already;*" and again, "He that believeth *hath* everlasting life."

To every man, then, who knows that he has a soul, that this soul *must* live for ever; that this soul must be for ever with God in bless, or for ever without God in woe; who believes, moreover, that "*now* is the accepted time, and that *now* is the day of salvation;" what question can be more important than this;—Am I saved or not? If death came this day to me, would I be found a man saved, or a man—not saved? Can I say with the apostle John and other believers, "we know that we have passed from death to life," and with Paul, "according to his mercy he saved us," or must I rather take up the words of the Prophet and say, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are *not* saved?" But it is possible, that no sooner is this question suggested for your serious consideration, than some one says in his heart, "It is without doubt important, and may legitimately be put: but how can it be satisfactorily

answered? Who but God, the Omniscient, knows those who are saved? For however plausible *our* reasonings or conjectures on the subject may be, still they are but the reasonings of fallible men, and can be of no value in determining such questions, which are after all better let alone." It is in this way men get quit of self-examination, making up their minds that all attempts to come to any true knowledge of the state of their souls, of their present safety, or present danger, are vain or presumptuous; they go on day by day "taking their ease in Zion," determined, as they say, "because no one can find out these things to take their chance." Now I will not, with such individuals as I suppose myself to be addressing, examine into the evidences of our being saved—the marks which distinguish true Christians from the world—or the methods by which believers may come to the blessed assurance that they have passed from death to life, and *are* saved. However important and interesting such discussions may be when judiciously conducted, it is unnecessary to enter upon them at present. The Prophet, in the words of our text, is mourning for those who are *not* saved. Of them alone he speaks; and it is to such that I would alone address myself. Now I wish you to consider, that however difficult it may be in any case to know who is saved, it may be very easy in a great many cases to know who are *not* saved. It is quite possible that we may not be able to say with certainty of any one man in the world that he is saved, and yet it is equally possible that we may be able to say with absolute certainty of many, that they are *not* saved. When gazing, for in-

stance, on a great multitude of human beings, we cannot with certainty say of any individual before us, that he is in health, while we may be able to say with certainty of many others in the crowd, that they are *not* in health. That man who looks so robust and strong, appears to be well; and he may in truth be so; but it is quite possible that a deadly disease at that moment is lurking in his vitals, which will speedily lay him in the grave. All we can say with certainty of such a person is, that he *appears* to be in health, and that, for aught we know, he is so. But while in this case we *may* be mistaken, we cannot be so in the case of that man, with the palsied step and feeble body—of that other with the pained countenance and pale cheek—and of that emaciated form with feverish pulse and hectic flush; those are *certainly not* in health. The evidences of good health may have deceived us; but in such evidences of bad health we cannot be deceived. So is it with the state of the soul. We may, in many cases, be deceived with apparently the best evidences of piety; yet in many more cases we may never be deceived with the certain evidences of impiety. Here, for instance, is a man whom we have long known; and the more we have become acquainted with him—the more we have had fellowship with him in public and private—the more we have watched and studied his sentiments and character, and seen how he discharged the various duties of life;—so much the more did the conviction grow upon us, that he was a godly man—a man who loved the truth, and was in earnest, desiring to serve God—or, in other words, that he was saved.

Yet it is *possible* that in such a case we may be deceived. We may have mistaken profession for principle, and feeling for faith. We may thus be deceived regarding ourselves. But, on the other hand, there are cases concerning which we can have no doubt whatever. There, for instance, is a man who does not even profess to believe in Christ, or pretend to respect the Scriptures. He openly blasphemes Christ's holy name, ridicules his words, and rejects him as the Saviour of sinners—that infidel is certainly not saved. There is another man who professes to believe; he is seen in the house of God and at a communion-table; but then, with all this profession, he is known in the market-place to be a dishonest man, or he is given to habitual lying, or swearing, or drinking, or cruelty, or bad passion, or uncleanness. He is a bad husband, or a bad father, or a bad master; he is, in short, a "worker of iniquity;" and if so, *he* is certainly *not* saved. Here, again, is one who is far better than either of those, a sober-living, honest, kind, charitable man. His family and friends love him; the neighbourhood respects him. But though a "sober and righteous," he is evidently not a godly man. He is never for instance found at the Lord's Table, seldom in the house of God. He speaks irreverently and slightingly of sacred things; there is nothing he does which a professed infidel might not do without deceit. It is impossible to resist the conclusion forced upon us by innumerable acts and omissions in his daily life, that he does *not* "live by faith in the Son of God," and is not "led by the Spirit," and that accordingly he is *not* saved. In all such

cases there is the presence of some positive vice which is the sure mark of Christ's enemies, or the absence of some grace which is never wanting in Christ's friends; and this warrants us in saying of such that they are *not* saved. We may entertain hopes of those who *appear* godly which are never to be fulfilled; but we cannot, while they remain in their present state, have any hope of those who are certainly ungodly. Far be it from us to insinuate, that such cannot be saved; all we say of them is, that they are not saved yet. Saved they may be, ere the day of grace ends; but if temporal death seizes them while thus dead in trespasses and in sins, eternal death must be their only and final portion. You thus perceive that it may be difficult or impossible to know who are saved, when it may be very easy to point out many who are *not* saved.

But we have been applying this principle of examination to others. We may apply it much more easily to our individual selves. We have seen how truly we may discover the danger of many around us, whose defects are apparent, whose disease is visible to every eye. Those defects, however, must be *apparent*, the disease must be *visible* before we are warranted in concluding that they exist. But when we examine ourselves, we require no such open and glaring evidence of guilt to enable us to come to a true judgment of our danger. We can only judge of others by appearances; but we may judge of ourselves by what we know to be realities, though perhaps concealed from every other eye but the eye of God. Conscience may lift up its awful voice and pass most

righteous sentence, and say *to* us "not saved," when no human voice dare say this *of* us. We may gather such evidence, from the daily and habitual doings and neglects of the inner man, as may justify us in most truly condemning ourselves, at a time when the doings of the outer man would not justify others in condemning us. So that while our profession and practice may deceive the pious, they may not be able to deceive ourselves—while they may defy the scrutiny of the world, their hollowness and want of principle may be speedily detected by the searching eye of our own minds during a few minutes passed in honest self-examination. When I, for instance, hazard the assertions—that you do not love God; that you do not love Christ; that you are never constrained by love and gratitude to do their will; that you do not love Christians because they are Christians; that you do not "strive," or "fight," or "labour," or do anything *like* this to save your soul; that you do not pray in secret; that you are not conscious of ever having gone, as a lost sinner, and pled with God, for Christ's sake, to pardon you, and to help you with his Spirit to lead a holy life: you cannot perhaps, but admit that I am speaking the truth. Nay, if I went farther, and charged you with specific acts of sin, habitually committed, while you know that "they who do *such* things cannot inherit the kingdom of God," it is possible that conscience would plead guilty to this, as well as to the other charges; and, if so, then is it certain that *you* are *not* saved. Open the Word of God, and see if every page does not stamp your outer and inner life as that of one who has not

yet known God, who is not yet saved? Could the very "least even in the kingdom of Heaven" say, that your experience and theirs coincided? It is true, indeed, that many may come much nearer the kingdom of heaven than you now do, and yet never enter into it; but it is just as true, that those so far off as you are, must certainly be out of it. This conclusion is a very sad and serious one to arrive at; it is not easy for the proud heart to admit it: but if it is the truth, you are safer with truth the most alarming, than with lies the most pleasing. It is surely much better to know the truth, however painful, in time, than to know it only in eternity. It is surely safer to hear it told you by the ambassador of peace before the throne of grace, where the "not saved" may be plucked as brands from the burning, than to hear it from an angry God before the throne of judgment, where your destruction is certain, and your salvation impossible?

And now, consider seriously the alarming condition of those who are not saved! It is a subject to meditate upon more than to hear about. One hour spent in truthful thought, is more profitable than a lifetime spent in hearing sermons and reading books without it. In the secret of your own chamber, or in the silent watches of the night, think on those words—"*not saved.*" Try and *feel* their meaning. I know, indeed, that they speak of a destruction which none living have yet experienced—of a state the consequences of which none living have yet beheld. But, nevertheless, by solemn thought, accompanied by prayer for light, and for an upright and understanding heart, you may by faith, in God's Word,

obtain such a sense of danger, as will make you ask in deepest earnestness, "what shall I do to be saved?" The flood is not yet come; you may be now standing on dry land; but you may have *some* notion of how terrible a thing that flood of destruction must be when it does come. It saddens and softens your heart, when you hear of a noble ship, with all her crew, perishing in the hurricane which hardly disturbed your sleep of peace with its wild and fitful howlings. And when some accident has laid an acquaintance suddenly with the dead, you look with pity on the mangled corse, and gaze with a shudder upon the pale and well-known countenance; you cannot choose but feel the death of the body to be a solemn thing; but what is this to the death of the soul? The destruction of the whole material universe is nothing to the loss of the soul of the poorest man who totters in rags through life's weary pilgrimage. How can we measure such a loss as this,—the loss of what is immortal? How acquire even a glimpse of an evil so vast, a destruction so infinite? That is no little evil, no small amount of misery, the production of which, would occupy the thoughts, and gratify the fiendish desire of Satan and his angels—yet, the destruction of the soul does this! That loss must be dreadful, to prevent which, the Son of God himself, left heaven; dwelt on earth as a man of sorrows; endured sore agony in Gethsemane; submitted to cruel scourgings and mockings before Pilate; and bled, and died, on the cross, while the sun was darkened, and the rocks were rent, as He cried "My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Yet

all this Jesus did to prevent the loss of the soul! You cannot think that any deliverance, but a great and wonderful one, would make—not the whole inhabitants of the earth, poor worms of the dust—but the mighty angels in heaven, rejoice? Yet they do rejoice, when the news spreads through heaven, that one soul is saved! Do not such considerations as these, when seriously entertained, help to make you perceive how frightful a calamity it is to be "not saved;" although men themselves, who are most concerned in the matter, may in many cases care little whether they be saved or not!

And what mean these words—"the harvest is past, the summer is ended?" Do they allude to the change of seasons merely? Then, they may remind you, that spring with its buds and blossoms, summer with its fruit and flowers, harvest with its crops, and winter with its storms, have in rapid succession come and gone, that much precious time has been given in vain, and passed for ever away, without its being redeemed—for you are not saved! Are different seasons of life here spoken of? If so, they will remind you, that the spring-time of your life came with its warm affections, fresh hopes, and keen feelings—and it may be with a parent's advices, and a parent's prayers—but you did not "seek God early," you "did not remember your Creator in the days of your youth," and soon the season passed, and you were not saved. Then came summer, the heyday of manhood, bringing more matured experience—a stronger mind, and riper judgment—but you sought the things of time alone—everything but the one thing needful—and manhood came and went in vain, for you were not saved! The

sober harvest, when manhood exchanged all the fading features of youth, for the looks of old age, arrived, when you should have been gathering the good fruit from the seed sown in spring, and matured in summer. And some fruit you did gather; perhaps the fruit of industry in the comforts of life, or the fruit of honourable dealing, in the respect of the world, or the fruit of study in "much learning;"—but not having sown to the Spirit, no *spiritual* fruit was gathered—and so the season passed, and you were not saved! And what! has the winter come? the winter of life, with its hoary locks and tottering steps, and body bent towards the open grave—and is it true of the old man, as it was of the young man, that he is not saved! If this season passes like the rest, in vain — remember, no spring time can return to you. But it is possible, and this is our last supposition, that these expressions may refer to different past seasons of grace. If so, how solemn the reflection, that peaceful sabbaths, holy sacraments, faithful preachings, and earnest prayers, serious advices and stirring warnings, domestic afflictions, sick-beds, deaths, and burials, have all been given and sent to you in vain — for these seasons have passed, and yet you are not saved! Add to all this the reflection, that while these seasons were passing, you were going further from God, and becoming more sinful and more guilty — and every hour carried by the stream (against which you never earnestly struggled,) nearer and nearer the gulf where there is no salvation — and you will not wonder that, in contemplating a state so bad, a condition so alarming, the Prophet should exclaim,—"For the hurt of

my daughter I am hurt: I am black; astonishment hath taken hold of me."

This is the language of sorrow,—the sorrow of one who knows the value of salvation, and the loss incurred by those who are not saved. It is the same kind of grief which filled the heart of Paul, when, speaking of the unbelief of his brethren, he said, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." It was this sorrow for lost souls, which made the Saviour weep over impenitent Jerusalem, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye *would* not." And if *you* believed God, would not sorrow fill your hearts too, for those who are not saved? If an angel came down from heaven, and in your presence put a mark upon some one you knew, saying, "As God liveth and is true, this man is not saved,"—would you not tremble for that lost sinner? would you not gaze with fear at the lost man? would his state not give you concern, and occupy your thoughts? If an earnest advice—if prayers offered up by you in his behalf—if affectionate entreaties could be the means of bringing him to Christ, and so of saving his soul—would you withhold the advice, or neglect the prayer, or grudge the entreaty? And what if that sinner was a brother or sister, father or mother — what if that sinner were yourself! How would you then feel at hearing such an announcement made by one who knew the truth, and would not deceive you? But tell me, if you believed the Word of "God who cannot lie," might you not be as certain, that there are many—perhaps yourselves among th

number—who are not saved, as if they were marked upon the forehead with an angel's hand? "Yet if men believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe if one rose from the dead!" But all holy men *do* believe God's Word. They need no additional evidence to convince them of the danger of those who are not saved; and, accordingly, *they* experience unfeigned sorrow for sinners, and they give the earnest advices, and offer up the sincere prayers, and bestow the affectionate entreaties, which all who believe not God as they do, ridicule as superstition, or despise as hypocrisy!

Let me now assume that there are some of you convinced that you are not saved; that while, on the one hand, there may be some who entertain the hope, rightly or wrongly, of their being saved; there are, on the other hand, some who are persuaded that this cannot be true of them; let me suppose, that even one individual who hears me, secretly confesses, what he would not at present perhaps confess but to himself, and hardly to his God—that he has never had such a concern for his soul, as has led him on his knees to a throne of grace, seeking salvation—that he certainly wants the Scripture evidence of being saved, and possesses the Scripture evidence of being "not saved;" moreover, that he knows and feels his state to be one of evil and of danger; then I ask such an one, "*Why are you not saved?*" It is true that the summer is past, and that the harvest is ended—that time has fled—life vanished as a vapour, and seasons of grace departed—leaving behind this sad result of—"not saved." It is

true, that no language can picture the danger of such a state;—but why is it not otherwise? Why is not the disease removed, and its awful consequences averted? "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Such is the last question suggested by the text, and the one which I would press upon the serious consideration of every upright mind that seeks to know in truth what we should "do to be saved." What replies can you make to this question? What reasons can be given for your continuing in your present state, and not rather obtaining the deliverance which you so much stand in need of?

Do you say, "My disease is incurable. It is inveterate. It cannot be healed." And what let me ask is that disease which the good physician, Jesus Christ, cannot cure? When he was on earth, he healed "all manner of diseases;" he made the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak, he even raised the dead. No one was dismissed by him as incurable. These cures he effected, not merely to do good at the time, or to prove only that He came from God, but also to teach the whole dying world, in all ages, what He could do for the bodies and *souls* of men; to assure *us* that He could "restore the soul," and make it see His glory, and hear His voice, and speak His praise, and walk in the way of His commandments—yea, raise it from the very dead. Jesus also cast out demons! You remember, for instance, the case of the demoniac in the country of the Gaddarenes, who lived in the tombs, and wandered naked among the mountains wild, "night and day crying, and

cutting himself with stones." No human hand could bind him, for he was possessed of demons. But Jesus cast them forth, though "they were legion;" and the poor man was found "in his right mind," sitting clothed at Christ's feet; and he who was a demoniac, became a messenger from God, and told his unbelieving countrymen "the great things Jesus had done for him!" Such blessed miracles prove to us the comforting truth, that *Jesus is more powerful than Satan.* He was so *then*—is he not so *now?* "All power has been given to Him in heaven and earth."—"Principalities and powers are made subject to Him." *You* cannot have a worse disease than those poor sinners in Judea had. Therefore, the Physician that was able to save *them*, is able to save *you.* I have heard of men who professed to cure with their medicines all diseases which afflict the body. Thousands believed them, and soon found that they believed a lie. But when God offers us this Physician, and medicine to cure our souls, how few put their trust in Him!

"But, I know not," you again say, "if Jesus is willing to heal *me.* I doubt not his power to heal, for he is omnipotent; but what hope dare I entertain that He will exercise that power in *my* behalf?" I reply, *try Him.* Unless you do so, you *must* perish. If you do so, you *may* be saved. Granting, for the present, that there is but a *chance* of salvation; yet, if the only other alternative involves the certainty of destruction, common prudence might lead you to the Saviour. "It may be, he will have mercy." You may have but little hope of relief from him if you go; but you can

have no hope of relief from any one else if you do *not* go.

But are there no stronger reasons than this to induce *you* to go to the Physician? Do not His *invitations* assure you of His willingness? You do not, I trust, think it possible that the Saviour would give an invitation to men which he did not wish, *in truth*, men to accept of? But He does invite every sinner to come to Him — and is consequently grieved, yea angry when they do not go. If an hospital was erected in a city "for the relief of all suffering citizens who came to it,"—the fact of your being among that number, would be felt to be a sufficient warrant for applying for relief without a more special invitation—"Come unto me," says Christ, "all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But "the Bride" (the Church) also says "Come," and whosoever will, may take the water of life freely." Do not His *commands*, as well as his invitations, convince you of His willingness? The commands which are given to men generally, are given to each man particularly. When God gives the general command, "Thou shalt not steal," he commands *you* not to steal, and wishes *you* to be honest. "But this is His commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" (1 John, iii. 28.) "*This* commandment," as much as the ten commandments of the Moral Law, are His, and which *you* are equally bound to obey. And if He commands *you* to believe, He *wishes you* to believe, i. e. *to be saved* through faith in Jesus Christ, "the Saviour of all men, specially of those who believe."

But let us turn again to the history of the good Physician, and learn from His life, as well as from His words, his willingness to heal every wounded spirit. I read of many who came to Him, weary and heavy laden, for rest, but I read of none who departed without having obtained the desired blessing. No sincere soul ever carried away a burthen *from* the feet of Jesus, except the pleasant burthen of a weight of gratitude and love. On one evening, we are told, "when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick, with divers diseases, brought them unto Him, and he laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them!" Merciful Physician! how willing was he to heal then! Equally willing is he to heal now; for "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Let us take one instance out of many, showing his mercy and love towards the poor and needy, and their ignorance of, and want of confidence in, His mercy and love. When he came down from the mount of Transfiguration, a poor distressed father met him with his sick boy. He had asked the disciples, during their Master's absence, to heal him; but they could not. He now comes to Christ. He gives a touching history of his child's sufferings, telling how he foamed and gnashed with his teeth, and pined away, and how the foul spirit cast him into the fire and water; and then asks the Saviour to help him, saying, "*if thou canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Now, observe this man's state of mind; he thought the only barrier to his son's recovery, was either the Saviour's inability, or unwillingness, or both; he had tried the servants in vain, and so his confidence in Christ, the Master, is shaken. "If thou *canst*," &c.

that was with him the only difficulty. But the Saviour shows him his error, by asking, "If *thou canst* believe?" as if he had said, I can save, but canst thou trust? Canst thou confide in me? This was the real question to be settled between the afflicted father and the Saviour, as it is now the great one to be settled between the anxious sinner and the Saviour. Not, will the Saviour heal me? but, can I trust him for healing? The distressed father is thus obliged to feel, that if there was any thing to prevent his child's recovery, that obstacle was in his own breast. Accordingly, there is a great struggle between faith and unbelief. He can hardly believe in Christ's power and mercy. Was it indeed true, that he could do *this* for him, and help him? Was the recovery of that miserable boy "possible," if he believed? But if he finds it difficult to believe this, he finds it more difficult to return to his unhappy dwelling, with his child unhealed. His heart is breaking. He bursts into tears, and cries, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!" His confidence is weak, but it is real. The Saviour bends over the boy, who, cast by the foul spirit to the ground, is writhing in agony, and, lifting him up, restores him in health to his father! "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there? Why, then, is not the hurt of the daughter of my people recovered?" If there be, then, one of you who is not "recovered," it cannot be from want of power, or a want of will, on the part of the Physician to heal you, *if you choose to be healed;* and if you do not choose thus to live, you deserve to die.

But, perhaps there are other reasons which pre-

vent you from being saved, that may be profitable for us to examine. May not your indifference arise from thinking that there is no danger? But, if there was no danger, how is it, that the disease under which you labour, is described in such remarkable language in Scripture? Is there no danger in being an "enemy to God!" a "child of wrath," because of disobedience?—in being a subject of the "kingdom of darkness?"—in being "condemned already?"—in being "dead in trespasses and in sins?"—in being "without God in the world?" Yet all this is true of you, if you are not saved.

You do not, however, see or feel anything, in your present state or condition, to alarm you? This is possible. So have I known men obtain rest from their pain of body a few hours before they died; they ceased to suffer, when death was seizing their vitals and turning them into the corruption of the grave: thus does the sinner experience most ease, when he is nearest to eternal death. But I have also known—and I daresay so have you—men brought to a sense of their danger, from perceiving the concern of others about them, when they themselves never would have discovered it from their own feelings merely. Have you never seen a man become for the first time alarmed about himself, as he saw the faithful physician look anxious—and no longer heard him express good hope of his recovery—and beheld his family gaze upon him with tearful eyes, or heard their low sobs, which could not be restrained? From these outward signs, he became convinced that something dangerous had befallen him. And thus, too, might the most indifferent sinner be made to see, that

some sore and terrible malady had seized his soul. If he was not in danger of some great, though to him unseen destruction, because of the existence of a great, though by him, unfelt moral disease — why do the great and good angels rejoice, when he escapes it? If he is not in danger, how is it that God himself commands, warns, beseeches him to fly from it? And if he is not in danger, why that sore agony in Gethsemane — that awful scene on Calvary — that dying cry from the Son of God? The danger of the sinner can only be measured, by what God has done to deliver him from it. And, if there is not inconceivably great danger, then the inconceivably great things which God has done to save us must have been unnecessary! It is thus that you may be made to know your danger, when you are too blind to know the true nature and vileness of the malady which occasions it. When you look within, you may be disposed to cry "peace and safety," —but when you look without, you cannot choose but see that an inevitable destruction awaits the impenitent.

But, perhaps, you do not deny the dangerous consequences of this malady of sin—that you profess a wish to escape from them—but imagine that you can do so without going to Christ. But God says, that "there is no other name given whereby we can be saved, but the name of Christ." It is for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered alone that God will pardon us—and pardon those only who will be pardoned in this way. It is the Holy Spirit freely offered and promised to all who receive Christ—who can alone teach us truly to know God's will, and effectually help

us to do it. If you refuse to avail yourselves of this appointed method of being healed, and prefer methods which appear to you (in your blind and sinful ignorance!) better and wiser, you are acting like Naaman, the Syrian, who refused to dip in Jordan at the command of the Prophet, and "went away in a rage," saying, "are not Abana and Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean." But you remember the advice given to this proud and ignorant leper, "if the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?"—and what was the result? "Then went he down, and dipped seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child—*and he was clean!*" Go thou and do likewise. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved, "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

And all this, it may be, you *intend* doing—but you see no immediate necessity for applying to the Physician. No immediate necessity! Is it not certain that you are every moment getting worse, and that you never can get better until you go to Him? Is it not certain, that if left to yourself, the malady which you so much love to-day, you will love much more to-morrow? Can you be holy, and enjoy peace, and love Christ, and obey God, too soon? And if you determine to keep that malady one week—one hour—what if God should permit it to possess you for all eternity? "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;"

but if you will *not* hear his voice "to-day," what if to-morrow, the righteous sentence should be passed;—"they *hated* knowledge, and *did not choose* the fear of the Lord; they *would* none of my counsel, and *despised* all my reproof, *therefore* shall they eat *the fruit* of *their own way*, and be *filled* with their *own* devices!"

But are those the true reasons which, after all, keep most men from seeking the balm that is in Gilead, and the Physician who is there? Are they not rather the mere excuses of a sin-loving soul, which perhaps desires to get *rid of the evil consequences of sin, but not of sin itself?* It is not unlikely, that I truly interpret your feeling, and read aright the wishes of your heart, when I say, that you have no objections to be saved from all the pain and trouble which attend your malady, and from all the fears of coming agony, if you are only permitted to keep the malady itself; that you have no objection to be cured, provided only the Physician will cure you in your own way;—that you have no objection to be saved from the curse of sin when you die, if you are only allowed to keep "the pleasures of sin" as long as you live. And, accordingly, the language of your heart is, "My disease I fear is dangerous; I am afraid of it. Why, then, am I not saved? There *is* balm in Gilead, there *is* a Physician there. I am willing to be healed; *but* let the cure put me to no trouble, no pain, no self-denial of any kind. Let it be done in spite of me, by an act of Omnipotent power. Save this body from being cast into hell; but do not cut off this hand, or pluck out this eye! Bring me into the safe way that leads to glory; but put me not to the trouble of striving to enter in by a gate so straight,

or of walking along a road so steep and narrow! Deliver me from the body of this death; but not by "mortifying the body," or by "crucifying the flesh," or by "putting to death the old man;" in one word, cure me, but give me no medicines bitter and disagreeable to flesh and blood!" And thus argues in his heart many a man, who has light enough to see the danger of sin, but has no heart to part with it. "Save me from falling into sinful acts; but permit me to indulge in sinful thoughts, and to enter into every kind of temptation. Save me from selfishness; but permit me always to gratify self. Save me from filth; but let me wallow in the mire. Save me from intoxication; but let me drink on. Save me from covetousness; but let me keep my gold. Save me from sloth; but do not give me any thing to do. Save me from a bad temper; but let me indulge it. Give me strength; but not exercise. Daily delight; but not daily duty. Patience; but nothing to try it. Faith; but nothing to shake it. Zeal; but nothing to engage it. Weanedness from the world; but no sorrows or afflictions to produce it. I wish light, comfort, and peace, without secret or earnest prayers at a throne of grace—without the Spirit of God being asked and obeyed—without hearing, reading, or believing the truth. I wish, in one word, to be a partaker of all the benefits of redemption—to share Christ's glory—Christ's inheritance—Christ's throne;—but not to share Christ's holiness and self-denial—Christ's sufferings and cross!" And is this the way in which dying, perishing sinners treat the blood-bought remedy, and receive the offer of eternal life! Is this the way they deal with the Saviour? arguing and disputing as if He were an

equal—insulting Him with offered compromises between His awful commands and merciful invitations—and the demands of a corrupt, evil heart? "How *can* men escape if they neglect so great salvation!"

Oh! where are the souls who are in earnest about salvation! where the upright souls who will meekly believe God's Word, and humbly and reverently do His will—where are they who will put their trust in the Physician; and, instead of prescribing *to* Him, be administered to *by* Him? Where are they who will truthfully go to Him in confiding prayer, saying,—"Lord Jesus, we have tried many Physicians, and they could not heal us; we now go to thee:—we are dead in trespasses and sins, poor and needy, blind and naked. The harvest has past, and the summer ended; yet we, guilty sinners, are not saved. But we are spared—and we have heard the glad tidings that there is balm in Gilead—and that thou art the Physician there—able and willing to save to the uttermost all who go to thee. Our hope is in thy Word. We believe; help our unbelief. We give ourselves, soul, spirit, and body, into thy hands. Send us adversity or prosperity, life or death. Give to us what remedies seem to thy love and wisdom best suited to us, and humble hearts to receive them; but, for thy great mercy, save our poor perishing souls!"

May the Spirit of God, without whose teaching man's teaching is vain, open the eyes of your understanding, that you may know the truth as it is in Jesus;—and open your hearts to receive it, in love; that believing in Christ, and receiving His Spirit, you may be saved. And to Father, Son and Spirit, one God, be all the glory! Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE TRUE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL SONG.

BY THE

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PSALM lvii. 7.

"*My heart is fixed, O God; my heart, is fixed; I will sing and give praise.*"

The text affirms a fact, and declares a resolution. "My heart is fixed;" this is the fact; and hence, apparently, the resolution, "I will sing and give praise." For it is to be carefully observed, that we must not regard these two things as thrown together by accident. It is indeed true, that we often meet, especially in the poetical parts of Scripture, with singularly abrupt transitions, and thoughts that either have no natural affinity at all, or none that we can trace, come before us in immediate succession. The proof and illustration of this statement are furnished in abundance by this

fifty-seventh Psalm itself; for though it be characterized by strict unity as a whole, yet its unity is rather that of poetry than of logic, consisting not so much in coherency of thoughts as in identity of sentiment. The various and somewhat incongruous topics that have been assembled in it, are so arranged and treated as to reflect the same light of confidence in God, and to breathe the same spirit of devotion to Him. When we pass on, in reading the Psalm consecutively, from the "sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows," in the fourth verse, to the rapturous burst of adoration in the fifth,—"Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, thy glory above all the earth," we *feel* that these two dissimilar strains of inspired song concur in elevating our conceptions of the divine supremacy, while yet it might be over-bold in any expositor to affirm dogmatically through what intermediate ideas the writer had advanced from the one to the other. But the judicious interpreter will always presume that the contiguous sentences of Scripture are closely related, whether he may be able to unfold their relation or not; and therefore, after having ascertained the meaning of words and phrases, he will exert all his strength in an earnest endeavour to discern how they are connected; for not otherwise can he enter thoroughly into the spirit of the author, or see the truths that are presented by the same light through which the author viewed them. And often the most precious truths themselves, still oftener, the most affecting views of these truths, lie hidden among those links and folds of thought by which they are grouped together. Besides,

doctrines and precepts, when standing single and alone, are neither so interesting nor so easily memorable, as when they are contemplated under all their mutual dependencies, as cause and consequence, or argument and conclusion, and are therefore so interlaced as to form parts of one compacted system.

I. Assuming, then, that some such relation exists between the fact and the resolution of the text, let us endeavour to ascertain what it is,—enquiring, as the first step towards this end, into the meaning of the words. What then does the Psalmist affirm by the expression, "My heart is fixed?" The language which he uses is so perfectly simple, that any attempt at verbal explanation is altogether needless; and this part of our enquiry will be satisfactorily met, when it shall be shewn *on what* the Psalmist had fixed his heart, and in *what way* it was so fixed. Now although he has not distinctly expressed it in the text, it is scarcely possible to mistake the object of his cordial and confident regard. David appears, from the title, to have written the Psalm in the time of the hottest of those persecutions which he endured at the hand of Saul, and he describes his situation as, in so far as human help was concerned, utterly desperate. "My soul," he says, "is among lions; "I lie even among them that are set on fire." "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down." These were the troubles respecting which he cries,—"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me; for my soul trusteth *in thee;* yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these

calamities be overpast." It was on God, then, that his heart was fixed; a truth which we might have inferred from the text itself, and still more decisively, from the exulting strain of praise with which the Psalm concludes;—"I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing into thee among the nations; for thy mercy is great into the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds."

This notice of the Psalmist's situation, besides pointing us to God as the object on which his heart was fixed, accounts also for the energy and fire with which he expresses himself in the text. His condition was destitute and perilous in the extreme. Without provisions, without adequate force, and without protection, he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains, by a powerful monarch. The fortified city dared not offer him a defence; for him the rock was no sufficient stronghold, nor its caverns a safe concealment. From the toils and hardships of a harassing flight, and from the utter hopelessness of a case for which there was no relief by human agency, he turned to God as his fortress and deliverer. Everywhere else there might be darkness and despair, but here there were light, consolation, and security. As he recalls to remembrance all that God had already done for him, and all that he had promised yet farther to do, his spirit enters a serener world, and he refrains from his complaint against his inveterate enemies. A new life is quickened within him; wherefore he strikes his harp to a new measure, and exultingly strikes it again, in giving utterance to the fulness of his confidence. "My heart is fixed, O

God, my heart is fixed." He announces it with all the bold abruptness of a new and most joyful discovery; he repeats it with all the energy of matured and unalterable decision.

And it will be observed, that in fixing his heart on God, the Psalmist more especially contemplates those gentler features of the divine character, on which the regards of the guilty and dependant creature must ever most complacently rest. "I will cry unto God, most high," he says; "*unto God that performeth for me.* He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of men that would swallow me up."—"God shall send forth his *mercy* and his truth." In another Psalm he exclaims, "O God, thou art *terrible*, out of thy holy places," thus uttering a sentiment to which the heart of every self-condemned sinner must often have responded. God, in his glorious majesty, commanding an obedient universe, as he appears in creation; or clothed with many thunders, as the Israelites saw and heard him on Sinai, cannot be otherwise contemplated by the guilty, than with awful apprehension. Upon the great Jehovah angels may gaze, unalarmed, though adoring, while the earth is quaking beneath his feet, and the heavens are rent and blazing around him; but that is no spectacle to be witnessed, or even endured by the eye of conscious guilt. Behold him in his stern dignity as a judge, stretching forth his arm to scatter fire and brimstone on Sodom, or frowning through thickest darkness on Egypt; behold him thus, and if you know him, and know yourselves, you must tremble and shrink back in dismay. "Our God is a consuming fire;" and sin-

ful flesh may not meet him as the author and avenger of his laws, without confessing, in deep amazement of spirit, that he is *terrible*. It is only when with David we see him sending forth his "mercy and his truth" to save us; it is only when we behold the glory of these attributes as they are emblazoned on the cross of his beloved Son, that our hearts, re-assured by this display of immeasurable love, turn to him with confidence and kindly affection. In the more imperial attributes of his holiness and justice, which are at eternal war with every form of evil, the hearts even of unreconciled sinners might, in some of their moods of feeling, be truly said to be fixed on God, though in a sense most remote from that of the text. With their eyes opened at last to their own sin and to the just judgment of God, and pierced through with that firiest bolt of divine vengeance—a remorse unsoftened, unrelieved by godly sorrowing—they might gaze upon him with a rooted horror, coiled up and crouching, as a man awaits the mortal thrust of his murderer. We must know Him as a merciful God, and be able to make our refuge under the shadow of his wings; we must see him in his mild and gracious character, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, before those guilty and therefore trembling hearts of ours can cordially embrace and rest upon him. So David makes the mercy which He had promised, and the truth which guaranteed the promise, the first and the last themes, the beginning and the end of his song. "Be *merciful* to me," is the cry with which the Psalm opens. "God shall send forth his mercy and his truth," is the ground of the trust expressed in the third

verse; and the last cadences of the strain seem to linger affectionately over the same endearing attributes—"thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds."

God, then, being the object on which the Psalmist had fixed his heart, it is next to be considered how, or with what sentiments, it was so fixed. Nor is this enquiry more difficult of solution than the last. The expressions of confiding regard which occur throughout the Psalm, indicate that the heart of the writer was fixed on God by faith. In faith it is that he exclaims, "My soul trusteth in thee, yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge;" and it is in the same faith too, that he purposes to pray, when he says, "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth for me." Nor could his heart have been otherwise fixed on God, than by the virtue of that all-important principle which lies at the very source of practical godliness, admitting the light by which divine truth irradiates the soul, and constituting the assimilating power, by whose energy the things believed are converted into the bread of life. "He that cometh into God," says the great apostle, "must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that seek him." In truth, practically and in effect, God is not otherwise revealed than to faith only; for they who believe not in his existence, have not, and know not, the true God at all, any more than if he did not exist; and so cannot possibly set their hearts on him. Nay, before the heart can be fixed upon God, there must be a belief which holds far higher conclusions regarding him than that of his mere being, and which enters

much more deeply into the soul than any mere reasonable conviction; there must be a clear apprehension, among other truths affecting his nature, of his goodness and mercy; and these must awaken, within the believer, the echo of a responsive affection. David's faith was such as that of which Paul speaks, "a believing with the heart." He believed in God, not as some great abstraction—some almost wholly unknown power existing in the distant heavens, afar from his creatures, and indifferent to their interests. On the contrary, he trusted in Him with a firm reliance, and a constant affection, as a very present help in time of need, as *his* God, and friend, and deliverer. He believed, in short, with a vital and appropriating faith, in that divine mercy which had so often been proclaimed in a general way, and in those special promises of it which had been made to himself in particular. He believed that, dark and disastrous as was his present condition and merely human prospects, he had yet not in vain been royally anointed by the prophet of God, and brought from peacefully following his flocks at Bethlehem, into the troubled career of public life. He believed that the glory and the power thus predicted for him, would certainly be accomplished by the God of truth, whose unerring word stood pledged to their accomplishment. Like Abraham, he believed the promises of God, even when their fulfilment seemed most hopeless and improbable, and thus believing, his faith was counted to him for righteousness.

This exercise of his faith, under the pressure of the heavy calamities with which he struggled, unquestion-

ably issued in its increase. As we trace his successive flights from Ramah to Nob, and from Nob to Gath, and from Gath to the cave of Adullam, and thence again to Mizpeh and Keilah, and the wilderness of Ziph, we cannot fail to be surprised at the stedfastness of a faith which seems scarcely ever to have given way. On a single occasion, indeed, a spirit of despondency prevailed against him, and he "said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul;" but this is a solitary instance. The mere fortitude of nature could not thus have sustained him amid his incessant wanderings and perils. While driven before his pursuers, the truth of God was the rock on which his soul reposed. His temperament, no doubt, was naturally noble; yet his patient and protracted endurance far exceeded the efforts of mere bravery: and he must have succumbed, had not the same power which glowed in his heart, when he encountered the lion and the bear in Bethlehem, and stood before the Philistine giant, extended to, and been invigorated by, his piety. His accordingly, was no cold and doubtsome faith. He was a willing, a simple, and submissive believer, who never brought his own presumptuous, or preconceived notions of things into competition with the divine testimony. What to him were mere appearances, when weighed in the balance against the promises of God? He might be pursued as a rebel to the lurking-places of robbers, or driven far away from the sanctuary, whose courts he so earnestly loved, to seek safety in counterfeited madness among heathens; still, God had said it,

and he was therefore confident that his light should yet break forth as noon-day. Thus relying on the word of heaven, grace was imparted to him, as to all, in a measure proportioned to his necessities; and every successive trial of his faith left it stronger and more fixed than before. To him, the Divine Word was "yea and amen," absolute and incontrovertable, alike beyond cavil, and above suspicion. He did not think that it might perhaps come to pass, and so sit down idly till he should see; he did not trust that it might possibly, some time or other, prove true, and meanwhile, act as circumstances seemed to direct. It was reserved for Christian believers, thus to chill and smother by their unworthy doubts, all that is animating and vividly real in the promises of God. David took his Creator's word as it was; and acted promptly and peremptorily on it, in the faith of its unerring truth. He threw all else away, and made it his only rule. The language of his fixed heart, and the concurrent testimony of his stedfast conduct, were to this effect; "I know in whom I have trusted, and that he will assuredly perfect, according to his word, that which concerneth me; for he who has promised, is also able to perform." How decided accordingly, and realizing are the convictions of his faith, as they are everywhere exhibited by the Psalms. There is no wavering, no cold and timid hesitation: everything is fixed, ascertained and secure. "What time I am afraid," he says, "I will trust in thee." "In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." "God is our refuge

" and our strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed." He says not, that he must make God his refuge, since there is none else; or that he must submit to the will of heaven, because it cannot be resisted. But he declares that it is so,—that he has done it. Therefore it is that, while attentively reading his sacred songs, we feel that the presence of God is in them—that God was near to the spirit of the writer while he composed them,—that his trust was a "fixed" and established persuasion,—and that the peace and the fearlessness of which he speaks, were not attainments which he aimed at, but substantive realities which he actually enjoyed. It is by reason of this spiritual energy, that the harp of David is still, as it was in the experience of Saul, a charm to drive away the sullen spirit of gloom — despondency. And yet, these forcible and consolatory expressions of the Psalmist are among us, modern believers, too often regarded as something not for us— as belonging to an order of religious sentiments that lies beyond our sphere; too often, therefore, they meet neither echo nor response among our Christian affections. This cannot be because God himself, or the nature of the worship which he requires, or the relation which the human spirit bears to him, has changed. The same Jehovah in whom David trusted, with a confidence so perfect and so full of repose, and, after the joys of communion with whom, his soul panted as the hart panteth for water-brooks, is also our God,—illustrated, and not obscured by a farther revelation;—set before us with a new and pre-eminent glory in the work of his Son.

Where, then, is our faith? our fervid and fearless trust? Compared with such sentiments in David's breast, do not ours sink into nothing? For their practical and articulate manifestation, we look and listen in vain. We hear no original psalm-strain rising boldly to heaven with its burden of mingled sorrows and confidence, and we meet with no man who, amid the struggles of life, relies on God, and on nothing else. These sublime heights of faith, on which the sweet singer of Israel habitually dwelt, are now, like the sacramental mysteries of the early Church, reserved, by an unhappy unanimity of consent, to be sought and scaled on a death-bed. Why do we not always feel the presence, the power, the goodness—in one word, the living and glorious actuality of a most merciful God? The secret lies in this—that David's heart was fixed,—in a bold and decisive faith, it was fixed, on God; whereas ours are still, at least, partially unsettled—divided in their allegiance—and often wandering after their own vanities. There can be no fixedness, no self-consistency, either in our hearts themselves, or in their religious confidence and enjoyments, so long as we look to God with a wavering, fluctuating faith. Let Christians run, looking unto Jesus. Do you, whose hearts are still unfixed, behold *him*—crucified and slain, the just for the unjust;—dead, and dead for you. Look steadfastly on the cross; and then, whether your hearts may respond to the Psalmist's resolution or not,—whether or not, in the fulness of your hearts you may exclaim, "we will sing and give praise;" you will surely be able to concur in his assertion of fact, when he says,—"my

heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." For cold, insensible, and utterly unbelieving must that heart be, which the cross, and Christ crucified, cannot fix.

II. But if the heart be thus fixed on God, praise and devout song will be the unfailing result; for fixedness of heart, or stedfastness of faith, is the only proper condition of the soul for these sacred exercises. Unless a man's heart be fixed in a faith like that of the Psalmist, he cannot, by possibility, either sing or give praise; whereas, on the other hand, if it be so fixed, these will be the natural and spontaneous expression of his feelings;—they constitute the speech by which the fixed heart utters itself.

It will be observed, that I speak not now of the merely outward forms of devotion, which may all be observed as precisely by the unbeliever as by the saint. The most ignorant and careless may take up the songs of Zion, and his voice may peal the solemn melody with the graces of an art, which no human ear can distinguish from the pure warm breathings of an adoring spirit. Such an one may stand as reverently, too, listening to a congregation's prayers, as if his soul were telling over again to heaven every confession and request which they contain. These outward acts form merely the dress of devotion; and as a holy habit may be put on to vary, or give point to the disguises of a masquerade—they may be assumed for some light and passing, or even guilty purpose. But they are not devotion itself. They reach not the ear of God, who hears the silent desires of the believer: or they reach that

ear, only to be rejected as an offensive mockery. God turns away with abhorrence from the imposture, however fair its mimic array, and however exquisite the music of its borrowed praise. True devotion is that which, before it break forth from the lips, has made the heart all its own. Whether it murmur its complaint in sad confessions, these are but the index of a burden which presses heavily on the conscience—the sighings of a weary and heavy-laden sinner; or whether it issue in earnest cries for pardon, these are but the faultering expression of a hope which struggles against an inward and humbling sense of guilt. Whether, again, it employ the language of adoration, that is merely the symbol of a sacred awe which has wrapped the soul in amazement before the majesty of Jehovah; or whether, finally, it break forth in songs of exulting praise, these are but the mechanism through which the heart of the jubilant believer proclaims its gratitude and love. Devotion, whatever be its form, sighing and sad, or triumphant and singing, is nothing but a name, unless it be thus the interpreter of a spirit that is full and overflowing with divine sympathies. And of this real, living, spiritual devotion, it is affirmed that it can have no existence, except where the heart has, by faith, been firmly fixed on God.

In illustration of which position, it may be asked, what ground or occasion there can be for such an exercise of the soul, while that soul is all unsettled in its aims and affections. The praise and singing which the Psalmist declared he would practise, were not to consist in the light chant of the pilgrim, who had no better

a reason for their adoption, than merely a wish to beguile the fatigues of his way: and where, if the spirit have nothing on which it can fix itself, and rest with unwearied satisfaction, is there anything to stir within it those deeper emotions which spontaneously seek utterance in song. "How may a man in smart, find matter to rejoice? How may a mourning heart, send forth a pleasant voice?" These are the pertinent questionings of an old poet; to which it might be answered, that although no cheerful melody could be expected from such a source, yet, even sorrow, because it implies some fixedness of heart, has its own range of tuneful utterances; whereas, he whose heart is not fixed at all, is beyond the influence and reach of every inspiration. Passing over the world without affections altogether, or with them wholly unmoved, and, like Noah's dove, finding, in the illimitable range of fancy and attachment, no place on which to plant the sole of his foot; or, wandering over desert places, with a soul that had been dried up and withered, through misplaced, and therefore defeated affections, and, like the demons of the evangelists, seeking rest, but finding none; why, such a man has neither the matter of praise and song pressed home upon his sympathies, nor has he the living energy within him which forms their fountain. To him every successive object of attention first brings weariness, and then disgust. If, melancholy and restless, men can find nothing within the wide compass of the earth, around which they can entwine their hearts in the embraces of a love which conscience approves—nothing to awaken their hopes, and therefore to stimu-

late their activities; nothing to fill their bosoms and cause them to swell with joy and gladness; nothing on which the fixed heart can repose with unexhausted and ever fresh delight: if thus they spend their lives without aim and without expectation, then where, in heaven or in earth, can they find the materials of praise, or the warm and joyous feelings which alone can translate them into melody? The richest blessings of God are conspicuous on every side of them; but though these may be scanned by the eye and apprehended by the understanding, yet so long as the heart feels not their worth and beauty, they will inspire no praise and awaken no song. And there is yet another condition of the soul, in which, though the affections be not wholly stagnant, they cannot be supposed to manifest themselves in the way of our text. There are men who, restless and given to change, can abide by no one fixed object of pursuit or enjoyment, who are perpetually turning from one thing to another, sanguine and sated by turns; displaying among the grave affairs of life, the levity and petulence with which a child treats his playthings. Their existence is a perpetual whirl, with the motion of which they grow giddy. Moments of enjoyment they may reach, but they are only moments; and they can hardly pause even to be thankful for them. In such a career, there is neither the time nor the repose that are necessary for stirring the deeper and richer sensibilities of our nature—nothing at all to prompt the matured and deliberate outpourings of praise. If such have any music in their spirits, it is not that of gratitude—it is not that of joy, or peace,

or confidence, or rest; it is but the dull and heartless lay which they employ to beguile their tedious thoughts during the pursuit of an hour. They sing only as the bee sings, which ceases its hum till it revel in the flower on which it has alighted, and then resumes the same drowsy monotonous sound as it goes in quest of fresher blossoms. And all this must have a speedy end. Those who thus flit incessantly, fickle and wayward, soon reach their limit, and are driven home upon the conclusion that all is "vanity and vexation of spirit." Without a fixed heart, disappointment and despondency must be the lot of man, turn whithersoever he may. He will soon grow weary of this world, in which he loves nothing; and weary of looking for another, in which he hopes for nothing; he will grow weary of all around him, and, at last, weary of himself. The flowers that bloom sweetly at his feet will become a weariness to him, because he will see that they are beautiful, while yet their beauty enters not, nor quickens his heart; the light of day will grow a burden, because of, to him, its fruitless bustle; and the darkness, because of its silence and loneliness. Vanity and vexation will become the burden of his only song; he will find nothing to inspire praise, because his heart will be insensible to all that is worthy of it, and life itself will become an affliction and a bitter curse.

Thus, if their hearts be not fixed at all, men can neither sing nor give praise, because there is for them no loved and trusted object to awaken those sentiments that seek utterance in song. Will their condition be improved, in this respect, if their hearts are fixed on

temporal things? At least it must be much otherwise with them on that supposition; for such things may sometimes be attained, and none ever sings more boldly than he who celebrates his earthly successes. The heart may be fixed on wealth, and having attained it, may swell with pride over the pleasures and magnificence which it commands: Yet surely, such an exercise, or perversion rather, of the human affections, must be too cold and sordid for any true music; barren, one would imagine, of all that can quicken our better sympathies, or awaken in our nature a sense of its own nobleness. Let the heart, therefore, be fixed in preference, on the acquisitions of knowledge, or on the peaceful gratifications of friendship, or on the warmer charities of domestic life. In these ranges of affection, there are chords which, if truly struck, might continue to vibrate through all eternity; for all pure and spiritual love has in it something of infinitude and immortality. In man's social, and especially in his domestic life, there is much that not only can fix the heart, but that is apt to withdraw it unlawfully from the far higher objects on which it ought to be fixed; and much, too, that from the fixed heart, can draw forth the deep, rich harmonies of human happiness. He, therefore, whose heart is fixed in this way, "will sing;" the light and the fire that are in him will utter themselves in the poetry and the music of this present world. But something else is necessary to qualify him for *giving praise.* So long as his affections rest and terminate in his merely temporal blessings, the song which these inspire, gay enough while it lasts, may, at any

moment, be turned into lamentation and woe. The love of God must be recognised in our human enjoyments; and the strains by which we express our earthly felicity must be combined and harmonised with those loftier songs which celebrate his praise, before the whole soul can be fully engaged in them, or can reach its final and secure resting-place. While the lark discharges its gushing melodies from the bosom of a cloud, its eye may be still resting on the home which it has chosen for itself among the verdure below; but ere it return, that home may be rifled by the bird of prey, or trodden accidentally to ruin by the foot of man or beast. Man's terrestrial possessions are not more secure. They shall pass away, leaving him desolate to mourn over their memory; or he shall die, and broken-hearted in death, leave them all behind him. He may sing over them while they are his, like the birds, in a few summer-notes, which will soon be mute, by reason of the wintry blight that overtakes all human things. But, even while he so sings, he is far from that song of "praise" resolved on by David. It is on God that the Psalmist's heart is fixed; and when he summons his glory to awake,—when he says, "awake up, psaltery and harp," it is for the purpose of expressing, not an earthly, but altogether a spiritual and divine, therefore, also, a permanent and secure affection. "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people;" this is his song;—"I will sing unto thee among the nations."

And fixed as our hearts may be; fixed too, on things that, in their own place, are both good and

lovely, this is a strain which we never can acquire, till they be fixed on God. The purest objects of earth may all be made subsidiary to divine song, by becoming the occasion of praise, and putting the soul, so to speak, in tune for it. But we must see God himself through and over them all,—we must see him with a clear spiritual discernment, as a stable and everlasting reality, before our song can rise above his gifts, and be heard by himself in heaven. Never, till we turn to him fixedly, in faith and affection, as our covenant God;—never, till, from ourselves and from this passing world, we look directly up to him as our rest and our refuge;—never, till we behold him in Christ as our reconciled Father, beaming love upon us, and owning us as the sons of his adoption;—never, till we know him to be near for our help, near to bless and protect us, near to dwell in us by his Spirit, and bear us up in his everlasting arms;—never, till we rest upon him thus, with confidence unwavering, unquestioning, unhesitating, will our souls grow full while we contemplate him, and, as having reached their final resting-place, exclaim in their fulness, "our hearts are fixed, O God; our hearts are fixed; we will sing and give praise."

Demonstrably, it is only from the full and the fixed heart—full of God and fixed upon him; that a song-stream of devotion can freely flow. If we go to our knees in the attitude of prayer, with no active faith at all, or with a faith that is uncertain and undecided, then, in that frame of mind, having no vivid perception of God, we will find no language to utter, because we will have no devout sentiments rising warm and

spontaneous within us, and forcing themselves upon our intelligence to be expressed. Who that has tried to lead the devotions of others, has not felt and been painfully humbled in this way? The vacant heart, having no panting desires, will not be fixed; and wandering through the whole range of matter furnished by memory, refuses to settle and enlarge its petitions on any. The glory of God, not being seen, cannot be declared. All is obscure and indefinite, and most unsatisfactory. Who, again, that has conscientiously persevered in secret prayer, has not often experienced a similar incapacity? We have bowed ourselves before God, ostensibly, at least; but having no fixed and vivid faith to realize his presence, the true feelings of devotion never were awakened, and our unstable thoughts wandered away from all that was solemn in our employment, to pursue a thousand floating vanities. And what can there be more humbling and discouraging, than to struggle for words, when there are no living sentiments to prompt them; or to rise from our prayers, conscious that we have not prayed—that we have not seen the Great King in his glory, nor presented one earnest and hearty request. We may use vain repetitions without a fixed heart. But if we would pour out our whole souls before God in those fervid and earnest supplications which, and which alone, we know to be acceptable; and if we would attain a humble assurance that we have been heard in heaven, we must go to the altar with fixed hearts. Then, and then only, as we review ourselves, and make our confessions before God, will penitence, working sadly within us, bring to our very

lips the language of humility and self-abasement; that language will come freely, pressing for utterance. And when we contemplate the justice and holiness of God, whose law we have so flagrantly violated, the trembling awe of the spirit within will furnish the tongue with the most significant expressions of awed veneration. When, again, with the Psalmist, we would "sing and give praise," the mercy of God will be brought home in clearest and most lively apprehensions to our hearts, and then, instead of finding it difficult to pour forth the melody of joy and salvation, that will become the only possible mode of giving form and voice to the sentiments that swell and glow within us. Most men have felt how, over their best temporal blessings,—over those dearest to them on earth, their hearts would grow full with a choking tenderness, and their struggling emotions could find no language but that of praise and thanksgiving—no exponent except the words of the Psalmist, when he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." And thus it is, when the heart is devoutly fixed on God himself, revolving all his greatness and glory; fixed in the earnest and believing contemplation of what he has done for a guilty world through the gift of his Son; fixed on him as *our* God, accepted, confessed, and trusted; thus it is that then a holy delight, a reposing and peaceful confidence, will diffuse themselves silently over our souls; and, instead of having to seek painfully for the language of devotion, we will be impelled by our own irrepressible feelings to exclaim as in the text—"Our hearts are fixed, O God; our hearts are fixed; we will sing

and give praise."—"We will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; we will sing unto thee among the nations; for thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." Such is the language that comes welling up from the living fountain of the believer's fixed heart; it comes unconstrained and unstudied—the natural and spontaneous expression of his holy feelings, or rather, these feelings themselves converted into articulate speech.

And now, let it be asked, in conclusion, of all who shall peruse these statements—have your hearts been thus fixed on God? No doubt, you have all had some lively impressions of his being and power. Every one of you, probably, at some time or other, has had close and painful apprehensions of his reality as a holy judge and dread avenger. In moments of conviction, or in the face of anticipated death, you have trembled and turned pale as you thought of his dreadful majesty. And it is something to know God even thus; for such alarms are as that darkest hour of the night which precedes the dawn; it is something to "remember God and be troubled;" for how much better and more hopeful is even this than the cold, sullen indifference of those on whom the Spirit imposes no restraint in their sins, leaving them "alone" to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. Be thankful, therefore, even for your terrors, as the only evidence which you have that you have not been absolutely given over to a reprobate mind. But let it be asked again—is this all? Do you know God only as a terrible being, who "makes darkness his secret place, and whose pavilion round

about him is dark waters and thick clouds of the skies?" If so, you know nothing of him yet as you ought to know; nothing which can fix your hearts on him in the deep, ardent breathings of a living devotion; nothing which can engage and draw forth the higher sensibilities of a believing spirit. And surely it is not thus that you would approach his sacred presence, in his own sanctuary of heaven, or in the more solemn ordinances of our faith, or in the ordinary exercises of his worship. So coming, you must inevitably return empty. It is essentially requisite that you should have a distinct apprehension of his mercy, mercy to you, flowing through the bleeding body of his dear Son, before you can flee to him to cover you, praying and panting for his pardon and his love. It is the Cross only that can fix the heart of the fearful, because self-condemned sinner; and therefore it is the Cross only that can introduce you to the joys of salvation, and awaken within you those devout sentiments that break forth in songs of exulting praise.

SERMON V.

CHRIST'S SUPREME AND UNIVERSAL DOMINION.

BY THE

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EPHESIANS i. 22.

"*And gave Him to be the Head over all things, to the Church.*"

The believer, though not a man of science, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, is so in its noblest sense. He knows what other men know not, and the knowledge which he has acquired under the infallible teaching of God, is of such a kind as is well fitted not only to sanctify, but to fill and to tranquillize the soul. Such a passage, indeed, as we have now read, is, when rightly apprehended, fitted to shed a flood of radiance

over all creation. No doubt, the universe is open to others, as well as the saint, but then it is only the framework of things about which they care. Their philosophy looks for nothing above it, and cares for nothing beyond it. Give them a telescope in their hands, that they may wonder over a few worlds, and lose themselves in the stars, or let them penetrate for a little way into the bowels of the earth, and they are satisfied. Or if we take them abroad on the moral world, they are not more elevated—they are not more spiritual in their apprehensions. The most shrewd among the children of this world — the man most versant with the changes and chances of this mortal scene—does not in his knowledge gain acquaintance with whatever is true and permanent. Every circumstance of common life, opposes the disposition of the soul to spring upward—the littleness of every day's work as well as its urgency—the contaminations of life and its shortness also—the carnality and the folly that infect every step of man, as well as the woes that cross his path, are all so many causes of depression or limitation, that confine him to a spot in creation, and hedge in all his goings. With the believer, it is otherwise. Separated by the grace of God, from a world lying in wickedness, and emancipated from the dominion of sense, he holds converse with things that are unseen. The boundaries of his knowledge are enlarged. The light of another region is let in upon this. The world and the things thereof—life and immortality—heaven and earth, henceforward assume a different aspect. The key of Providence is put into

his hand, and as he reads the declaration, that Christ crucified, but now exalted, is Head over all things to the Church; every thing assumes order and significancy—and this earth, though a foreign land, becomes the secure dwelling-place of a covenant God.

Praying, then, that God may be pleased to open our minds to the right apprehension of this great central truth, the doctrine of Christ's supreme dominion, we would observe, in the *first* place, that it is *given him of the Father*. Such is the affirmation of the text, and the bearing of the whole context. It plainly intimates and implies, that the dominion spoken of is not essential and intrinsic, but secondary and derived. Such a power of a primary kind there is doubtless attached to Christ. As a partaker of the divine essence, and equal to Jehovah in all the powers of the Godhead, he sat upon a throne that is high and lifted up—the Author of all existence—the Being who formed the world and built the skies. The angels, those blessed spirits who surround the throne, all worshipped him, and though he had never suffered and never died, he would still have been the King of kings and the Lord of lords, in possession of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. But it is not with what is primary and essential we have here to do. It is the distinguishing feature of the Gospel, that God in his high sovereignty hath thought fit to reconcile the world unto himself, by the manifestation on earth of his own Son, and that as Christ came into the world, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, so did it please the Father that in him should all power dwell. Hence, we find

that his elevation to his right hand in heaven is in the scheme of the Mediatorship universally connected with his previous life, and that not merely in the way of sequence but of reward. It is said in one place, "Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." In another place it is said, "that for the sufferings of death, he is now crowned with glory and honour." This is the view which Scripture gives, so that it is quite true that as in resuming his place in the heavenly kingdom, he was only occupying a place vacant by his presence on earth, it is to be remembered also, that this is to be connected in the administration of heaven with his universal obedience and immaculate death. To meet the demands of the law he came into the world, and having magnified the law and made it honourable, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, and Calvary gave way to a throne and a crown. The pathway of suffering was the pathway of glory, and the cries of his infatuated brethren, "Away with him, Away with him, Crucify him," became the heralds of other sounds in the New Jerusalem and temple above. It was all the work of his heavenly Father. As the greatest of all gifts, Christ was sent into the world, and he who was God's unspeakable gift, must not pass without his reward. God that gave him to die, gives him to reign. Isaiah says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities: Therefore *will I* divide him a portion

with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." It is said in John,—" These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said,—Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee; as *thou* hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." And Paul says,—" Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, *wherefore God* also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." The dominion of Christ, then, is not only the reward of his sufferings, it is the gift of the Father. In the apprehension of the believer, the ascension of Jesus passes for no empty pageant. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and they are dispatched from the throne. The vision of heaven bursts on the eye. The sound of approaching archangels floats in melody on the ear, while far above there is heard the voice, " Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in. And who is the king of glory?" It is the Prince of Peace; and as amid the gratulations of angels, Jesus occupies the throne, are we not reminded of Jordan where it was said, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"

In the *second* place you will observe, that Christ's absolute supremacy is here inculcated. He is given to be Head *over all things.* In the way in which this is put, you will remark there is no reserve. Though the dominion given Christ of God is a grant, it is not on

that account limited. Universality is written on it, and such universality as not only covers this world in all its departments, but pervades all space, and every order of created intelligence. If, for example, there are angels, the first-born of creation, they are not beyond his control. They await his bidding within the vail, where his temple arises. They are the ministers of his throne, and which of them can resist his will? They run in the orbit of duty like the planets in their course, unfettered in their march and unsullied in their brightness. And Jesus Christ is the central light. Around him they all revolve. He sends them on his errands; employs them in his service; and oftener perhaps than we imagine, makes use of angels on embassies of mercy, from heaven to earth. Or, as there are devils, so must they all confess his rule. Fallen stars they are, wandering in the emptiness of space, but not unchecked. The Lord of glory has his hand on them. Hitherto shall ye go, but no farther, is the voice of one who is mightier than they. He restrained them while he was upon earth—when he ascended on high, he triumphed over their principalities and powers, making a show of them openly; and yet a little, and at the word of Christ, and none else, Satan, their apostate Prince, shall be seen to fall as lightning from heaven. And if we take our stand upon this globe, what element, we ask, in the natural world, is beyond his control? There is no place where his voice does not reign. He causes the most insensible creatures to hear it. He speaks, and it is done—he commands, and it stands fast. He appointeth the moon for seasons, and the sun knoweth

his going down. The day is his, the night also is his. He has made summer and winter. He gives the whirlwind its commission. Even the unruly sea acquiesces in his mandate; "here shall thy proud waves be staid." "The voice of the Lord is powerful—the voice of the Lord is full of majesty—the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars—the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire—the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness." Or, which among the mighty men, and rulers, and princes of this world can say, I am my own master? He has a master in heaven, though he knows it not. By Christ, kings reign, and princes decree justice. He sets up one, and casts down another. There is nothing like chance. Amid the whirl of what men call the fortuitous events of life, the will of Christ must be regarded as receiving its fulfilment; and as in heaven, the seraphim bend to his behests, so on earth does he hold empire for the accomplishment of his special purposes. No province claims exemption from his providential rule. It is absolute and unlimited; and while it embraces the vast, it carries its resistless influence to all the minute and unnoticed diversities of existence. Or need I tell you, that as all the princes of this earth depend on him, and all the powers of nature obey him—that as angels in heaven, and devils in hell, acknowledge his sway, so does his empire embrace all worlds—every part of a created universe? It is not merely this or that region that is touched by his sceptre, and girt about by his power. Not merely this or that world among the many that roll afar, which owns Christ as its King. Shew me

one above, or beneath, or around us, and I say, the Lord is there—there to rule—there to control—there to judge. My text says so. "Over all things," is written on the crown which he wears. Every creature, whether animate or inanimate—every fragment of creation which garnishes the heavens, is placed under the mediatorial government of the Redeemer. The outline of his throne fills all worlds. "He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the dwellings of men, none to stay his hand from working, or say unto him, what dost thou?"

What a view, my friends, does this give us of the power and the supremacy of the Lord! We are apt sometimes to forget this in the poverty of Bethlehem and in the reproach of Calvary. In a suffering Saviour we are prone to forget a glorified Lord. But why so? and especially, brethren, when the cross and the throne are so closely connected. The one should lead us to the other; and never should the supremacy of Jesus come home so fully to our hearts, as when read in the symbols of his death. The cross should remind us of the crown. And *such* a crown, my friends! In surveying it we are like men placed on the margin of the sea, whose depth no line may fathom, and whose bounds no eye may reach; or rather, the believer, when meditating on this subject, is as, compared with other men, like the angel of the Apocalypse, whose feet are "in the sun"—not on earth, the mere resting-place of the heavenly light, but in the great centre of all illumination. Sometimes, indeed, with an eye of sense, he looks up-

on the crowns of this world, and he sees them obscured. A cloud passes over them, and it is dark and impenetrable. But place him in the sun, the region of faith, and the view is changed. There is no eclipse there; or if there be, it is because of the glory that dazzles, and not of the shadow that overwhelms. Every thing is seen in its orbit, and over all there is a presiding King. Surely, worldly science is nothing to this! It may establish the doctrine, that the material system, whatever be its extent, is related in all its parts to the whole —that an efficient dependency and correspondence links every globe to its system; and also, that every system, or cluster of systems, is by the same laws connected with the community of worlds among which it moves. The all pervading principle of gravitation, the transmission of light, and other influences of a different kind, are proofs of this—they are manifest alliances, which give oneness, continuity, and order to the vast assemblage of the heavenly host. Yes, and the mere worldly man may have much pleasure in the contemplation of it. He may have pleasure in thus seeing the universe as from a central station, and in comprehending the laws by which it is governed. The sun in the heavens may be more to him than the ornament of a canopy that is over his head, and as he considers it in its place in the skies, while, world upon world, is revolving around it, order springs from confusion, and light from darkness, and the mind is filled with the praises of Him who hath made all creation a temple of glory. But then the wisdom of man has not exhausted the secrets of the universe. There are other lessons than what philosophy gives; and when I

see the Christian, not on any lofty platform, but by the table of his Lord, and thinking on his crown; when I see him, not proudly, but humbly looking up to the skies, and saying my Lord is there—there among all worlds: or when he looks abroad on the footstool, and still beholds his glorious King, I see him in possession of a truth, which, more than all the laws of the material world, harmonizes the universe, and brings light, and peace, and joy to his soul. With this assurance he is satisfied; yea, he is comforted and refreshed. Christ assumes his proper place. Around him all events, whether in heaven above, or on earth beneath, are seen to move. He is the centre in which all the lines of nature and providence meet. He touches the cord, and angels keep their place; and devils keep their place; and wicked men keep their place. They cannot break from their sphere. Hell is naked before him, and destruction has no covering. Heaven is the great metropolis, and Christ is there—there with his sceptre and his throne. This earth is his footstool, and it is not for the worms of the dust to contravene, or oppose his will.

In the *third* place, you will observe the special purpose for which Christ exercises all this dominion. It is said that he is Head over all *to the Church*, or *for the Church*, as the margin bears. The Church's good is the great object contemplated in Christ's providential administration; and in saying so, we of course do not employ the word in any sectarian sense. It were wrong to do so. That kingdom which has Christ for its Head, and all believers for its members, is not this or that particular denomination of Christians. It is the Church of the living God, for which

the Redeemer died; it is the Catholic Church, in its scriptural sense, and as such it must ever remain the one great monument on which are inscribed the praises of the true and the living God. And this it is necessary to take with us in explaining our text. For it will not do in our interpretation of Providence to say, that for that particular section of the Christian community to which we belong all the arrangements of the world are to be made subservient. This were delusion not less dangerous than that of those who would seek to monopolize Providence, as though theirs were the sphere wherein peculiarly God holds empire for the accomplishment of his special purposes. It is not for this or that man that the Governor of the world draws with unfathomable skill the materials of his dispensations; and it is not for this or that body of Christians, but too often frowning defiance on each other, that Christ has been raised to the throne of universal dominion. It is for the Church Universal—the incorporate company of all Christians—and it is when we escape from the low ground of a narrow and sectarian bigotry, and survey the body of which Christ is the Head, that the scheme of Providence appears in all its magnitude and interest. Indeed, it is only in this way that the truth of our text can have its consistent meaning in the Gospel scheme. If it be assumed, that the Eternal Word was made flesh—that He who was before all things, and in whom all things consist, humbled himself, and passing by the nature of angels, took upon him the nature of man—then does the Church ransomed by his blood, and constituting his body, assume its proper place in the administration of heaven.

If it be true that Christ died for *it*, and for *it* hath gone into the holy of holies, there to appear in the presence of God—it were only to be expected, that rescued from the usurped dominion of the God of this world, it should not be overlooked in the councils of Him who is its great deliverer. They who were rescued on the cross cannot be forgotten on the throne—and accordingly it is the doctrine of Scripture on this subject, that though in the progress of this world's history, there is many an evolution of the bright and prosperous, as well as of the dark and mysterious—they are travelling onward to the same point. There is an ocean which engulphs all—every thing is tributary to the Church. After the crucifixion, for instance, the Jews had imagined, that if the name of Christ was mentioned in future ages, it would only be as that of an impostor whom vengeance suffered not to live, and the zeal of whose followers had expired at the cross of their master. And yet before many days had elapsed, the Apostles were no sooner visited by the influences of the Spirit, than they appeared openly in the midst of Jerusalem, publishing the resurrection of Jesus to those priests and elders who had condemned him, and manifesting a boldness and intrepidity which shook the councils of the Jewish State. At the death of Stephen too, the energies of the nation were wasted in the despairing effort of destroying the Church—the fires of martyrdom were kindled far and wide in the land—Saul had girt himself for the unholy task, and long after, when Christ laid him, a trembling suppliant, at his feet, and sent him through the world to labour and suffer and die for his sake, do

we see in every land the persecuted followers of the Lamb subjected to fury the most relentless, and sufferings the most intense. "They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom this world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth." And yet even then, can we forget that the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church? It was at that very season when the Church of the Redeemer was covered with the signals of distress—when the roll of the Prophet was seen flying through the heavens, inscribed within and without with mourning, and lamentation, and woe, that the cause of the Redeemer was awaiting its triumph. Through the darkness of affliction, the light which had shone in Pentecost was struggling to break upon distant lands. Jerusalem and its temple receded in the distance, and strangers welcomed the joyful sound. The first beams of the Sun of Righteousness broke over the nations, uniting the inhabitants of the globe in one family, and in the bonds of a common salvation. And still did the Church out-last it all. The prediction was fulfilled—"Why doth the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision."

Such is the doctrine of our text, and it leads us at once into an interior world. We are apt to be detained on the surface of things, and to go no further. If so, it is not the fault of our text. It dismisses all of us to

a consideration of the secrets of Christ's empire. It leads us up and down among his works, and tells us the reason of them all. "For the Church" is the end of Providence—and though you and I, by reason of the darkness which besets us, may not always be able to read it—let us believe it still. How this good is to be subserved, may not always be plain to us—but neither is it so in the history of the solitary member of Christ's mystical body. No doubt he hath the assurance that all things shall work together for good to them who love God—but how that is to be accomplished, whether by prosperity or adversity, he cannot tell. The sunshine of heaven may follow him all the way to the grave—or health may be exchanged for sickness—riches for poverty—friends for foes—and after the brightness of morning, the noon, or the evening of life, may set in with dark waters and thick clouds of the sky. But he does not repine. Having graciously assumed the paternal character, Jehovah has engaged to fulfil the paternal functions. And this he does with a wisdom that never errs—a fidelity that never fluctuates—an affection, that like himself, is without variableness or shadow of turning. His Providence may change its aspect, but his mercy is still the same. Every trouble that grieves, and every comfort that gladdens, is the boon of the same hand—the arrangement of a Father's wisdom, and the appointment of a Father's love—and when earth has given place to heaven, he will praise him there—not merely for the Saviour who redeemed, and the Spirit who sanctified, and the consolations that refreshed, but for the very sorrows which once converted the garment of praise into the spirit of

heaviness. It is so with the Church. By the aid of Revelation, we obtain a little light on this subject. One or two wheels are submitted to our inspection, that we may gather the principle on which they move, and learn that he who has unveiled a little, will in due time explain all. You see why this nation is raised to distinction, and that falls into decay. Ever and anon, the protection of him to whom belong the shields of the earth, is as a wall of fire around his inheritance—and amid the agitations of human passion, and the tumults of the people—and during periods of history, when kingdom after kingdom has passed from the earth; the Church of the Redeemer still survives, yea, is edified, and multiplied, and increased. At one period, the storm of persecution burst upon it, and many of the early Christians were consigned to torture, and to death. Christ had ascended up on high—the Apostles were all dead except John; and to the eye of man, the cause of the Redeemer seemed to have been crushed. Even the exile of Patmos, in the loneliness of his retirement, gives way to momentary doubt and despondency; when lo, there is one like unto the Son of man, who lays his right hand upon him and says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore." Christ was with his Church. The arm that guarded it was Almighty, the eye that watched over it, neither slumbered nor slept—the love that encircled, was without variableness or shadow of turning. In their afflictions, Christ was afflicted—in their oppression, He was oppressed—in their sorrow, He was troubled. The cry of the persecutor had as-

cended up before him; and when we behold Jesus as if forgetful of the songs of the redeemed, and the movements of nature, descending from his throne to animate the faith of his saints,—are we not reminded of the declaration, that God hath given him to be Head over all things to his body the Church? Yes, the mystery of redemption hath brought other wonders to light, and the most amazing facts must still be inferior to this. We have the highest authority for stating, that the Church on earth is the ground-work on which are inscribed the praises of the living God, in order as the Apostle informs us, that by that Church "his manifold wisdom might be made known in heavenly places;" and there is no presumption in the thought, that were the universe laid open to us, we might see its interests controlling other orders, and other spheres of created existence. The presence and the supremacy of the incarnate Word in the heaven of heavens, the dominion of one who is wearing our nature amidst the principalities above, has brought other suppositions within our range; and could we interpret Providence by the light of the footstool, as shall be one day done by the light of the throne, we might see the Church, as by a law of moral gravitation, stretching far beyond the limits of the human family, and in its imperishable interests moulding the history and the economy of the skies. This much, however, we do know, that the Lord hath not purchased it with his blood, to be injured by the calamities of this world, or touched by the miseries of the next. It is the greatest wonder in the universe. All Providence is subservient to it. Herod on his throne and Pilate on his judgment-seat—Moses in his wander-

ings and Paul in his ministry—Satan in hell and the angels in heaven, concur in ministering to its good. The world itself is upheld for it; and when the mystery of the cross is wound up in the final happiness of all the redeemed, this earth, the mere platform of its exhibition, shall be swept away from the sky.

In concluding our short illustration of this most important subject, in which we have rather hinted at the separate topics, than opened them up — we need scarcely say how fruitful it is in practical instruction. Many are the important inferences it suggests, which, if duly pursued, would necessarily lead us into the whole of Christ's mediatorial work. But we must content ourselves with asking you to acknowledge Christ's supreme and universal dominion, and to acknowledge it too in every event that occurs. Learn brethren, to confess a divine providence, and to see it in the hand of Jesus—of Jesus the Saviour, and all prevailing intercessor within the vail. And confessing it with your lips, learn also to acknowledge it in heart. There is one way alone, in which you can do this. You must go to the cross before you come to the throne. You must be humbled before you are saved —you must be crucified to the world, before you can be exalted above it—you must, through the triumph of your great and glorious King, in whom alone you can have confidence and hope—through his grace assisting you, and his Spirit dwelling in you—pass through many painful conflicts, before you emerge into glory, and honour, and immortality. Look, then, to him who has gone through humiliation and suffering —through the assaults of the devil—and the persecu-

tion of men, and the hidings of his Father's face, and is now rejoicing before the throne. You cannot doubt his love—you cannot doubt his power, and why not place your dependence on Him, whether for the body or the soul, whether for youth, or for age, whether for time or for eternity? Independent, no man can be. Perhaps, there is nothing of which men are so tenacious as this; and even when destitute of the substance, they will oftentimes boast in the shadow. Such were the Jews, when in reply to our Lord, they said, "we are Abraham's seed, and never were in bondage to any man." What right had they to say this—they whose forefathers had been in Egypt, they who more than once, far from the sanctuary of their God and the sepulchre of their fathers, had been forced to confess, that their pleasant things had been laid waste, and that their holy and beautiful house had been burnt with fire; they who even now had the Roman eagle in their streets, and the centurion with his band in their houses, and that coin in their hands with the image and superscription of the conquering Cæsar? And what right hast thou, O sinner, to boast thyself of thy freedom, simply because, like the Jew of old, thou hast treated Christ with contumely and scorn? Hast thou then no master whom thou servest? No tyrant whom thou obeyest? Hast thou no arbitrary laws to command thee—the laws of this world's opinion, and extravagance, and sin? Because trampling on the government of one, may you not be under the allegiance of another? Though disclaiming the service of Christ, may you not obey the devil with eternal misery for your reward! Verily, the dominion

of Jesus is not like his. How gentle is it in its sway, and how comforting in its history, and how satisfactory in its results! It flows from another source, and is crowned with another reward. It points to the cross and to the tomb, and tells us that for this end Christ "both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living." And shall we hesitate to admit the lawfulness of a title obtained by so much degradation and suffering? Shall the children of this world run when a taskmaster calls, and shall we creep along with a languid devotion when a Saviour speaks. Shall they live to-day and to-morrow and at all times and seasons, under a bondage, not the less enthralling because willingly borne; and shall we engage in the service of the blessed Jesus with reluctance or reserve? O let us rather be persuaded to carry into that service all the fervour, and faithfulness, and loyalty of hearts captivated and settled by the manifestations of his grace. Let the love of a crucified Saviour, shed abroad on our hearts, give decision and life, and soul to our profession. Let it make us loyal to his crown, and jealous of his honour, and swift in his work. These are the things that accompany salvation. These are the things that bring a man peace at the last, and stand the fiery trial of death and of judgment.

There is a caution, however, my dear brethren, we must give you before concluding; and it is this. Do not speak too much about His crown, of which we have been discoursing to you. You cannot think too much of it—you cannot delight too much in it; but you may over do it in talking. Beware of this—beware of a forward tongue. Beware of a love of display. The

loyalty of the *heart* is the desirable thing. Above all, beware of scepticism on this subject. Though the diadem of your Lord has been often handled as a very familiar thing — though not unfrequently it has been cast about as a bauble, amidst the throes and tosses of ecclesiastical men—let not infidelity touch your hearts regarding it. It is a crown still, and blessed be He who wears it; he did not leave it on earth, to perish like a wreath in the convulsive grasp of contending parties; or transfer it from his head to any Church, or to any Pope upon earth. It is matter of gratulation to all who know the frailty of their own frame, that we are not vested with the lofty privilege of excluding others from the kingdom of heaven; and that they, on the other hand, are not permitted to exclude us — that this is the prerogative of Him who holds the keys of life and of death. And it will be seen at last—when he shall come, and shall not keep silence—when a fire devours before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him—then shall he sit on the throne of his glory. Before him shall be gathered all flesh; and while the prayer echoes through the skies, "Father I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory"—then shall be verified the saying of the King, uttered in the day of his humiliation:—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." O may this thought, all solemn and important as it is, keep our hearts and lips — that seeking through faith an alliance with Christ now, he may take us for his companions and friends, for his joy and for his praise in the day of his glory. Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE SALVATION OF MEN THE ONLY ADEQUATE PURPOSE OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

BY

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HEB. v. 9.

"*Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*"

It may be laid down as a principle in reference to the operations of the Almighty, that he ever accomplishes his purposes at the least expense of means. Consideration of the divine wisdom would previously lead us to expect that such should be the case. And when the student of nature reports, that in no department into which he carries his inquiries does he find the fact to be otherwise, and so often calls us to remark the poverty of the means compared with the magnificence of the results effected, all, we feel, is but in ac-

cordance with what we should have looked for in *His* ways, who is wise in counsel and excellent in working.

It follows from the principle stated, that in every instance in which we find means to have been instituted by God, possessing in themselves a character of great magnitude and importance, we must, in such case, refuse to acknowledge as *the first and chief purpose of their institution*, any end actually served by them, which, however, either is manifestly of disproportionate grandeur and importance, or clearly might have been accomplished by an instrumentality of inferior magnitude. For example ;—consider what a character of importance, viewed as called into being to serve some purpose or other contemplated by the Creator, the discoveries of modern science have imparted to that sublime scene which night discloses to us in the starry heavens. Can we for a moment suppose, that the end in chief for which these shining worlds were hung out on high, was nothing more or better than to serve for times and seasons to us,—or to send down upon the gloom of our winter nights the imperfect illumination they impart—or to regale the contemplative eye of man with so wonderful a display of creating power — or to be of use in any of those ways in which human science and ingenuity have made them of avail ? Do we hesitate to confess, that we see in each and all of these uses, such an insignificance compared with the overpowering grandeur of the means contemplated, as renders utterly absurd the idea, that for such ends alone the Almighty gave these countless worlds, or rather systems of worlds, existence ? Propose the idea, that in each of those bright spheres to which we lift our

view, we behold a theatre of life and enjoyment to a population of living, sentient beings, throng and diversified as that with which we find our own abode to be peopled; and then we have presented to our minds a use and purpose for these hosts of the firmament of such dignity and importance, that we are conscious of no manner of incongruity while we say, that here was the Almighty's great end in their creation. But, assuredly, until this idea has been started, and while we look only at such other uses of the stars as have been adverted to, we want wholly such a harmony betwixt end and means as, in view of the divine wisdom, we require to find in the Creator's purpose, in so stupendous a system of means as these stars become, in our view, when science exalts them, from being merely the bright spots in the over-canopying sky which they seem to the vulgar gaze, to the station each of a vast world far in the depths of infinite space.

Assuming the Author of the system of creation and of the economy of grace to be one, the same principles will hold in regard to the divine operations in both. And no less, therefore, in contemplating the provisions of the scheme of grace, than in contemplating those of the system of nature, are we forbid, where an instrumentality possessing a character of high magnificence is found to have been instituted, to acknowledge as *the prime purpose of God in its institution*, what either is a purpose of unsuitable importance, or one which, we can plainly see, might have been accomplished by means of a less magnificent character.

The application of this principle in corroboration of the doctrine of the text, namely, that Jesus Christ was

"made perfect," by suffering made perfect, that is, fitted and qualified, in order that he might become "the author of eternal salvation," is direct and obvious. Nor may it be uninteresting or unprofitable to pursue it. It will conduct to the confession of Christ Jesus in the character of Redeemer of men, by a path less familiar. It may serve to present the distinguishing doctrine of the Gospel in a light, commending it in a peculiar manner to the reason. And it will serve, also, to bring out in a striking point of view, the harmony and dependence subsisting among the great doctrines of our holy faith.

What we say then, is, that contemplating the sufferings, or, generally speaking, the humiliation, of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the light of means instituted by Heaven for the accomplishment of some special end, there is a character of grandeur and magnificence attaching to his manifestation in the flesh in a suffering condition, which forbids our acknowledging any thing as the purpose primarily in the view of God in appointing it, excepting alone the effecting of an eternal salvation for men; inasmuch as every one other purpose actually served by Christ's coming in the flesh, and to which his sufferings contributed, either falls short of a suitable importance in itself, or is such as did not require so stupendous an instrumentality to be adopted.

I.—1. Who, let me ask, first of all, was He, in respect of original and proper nature, who did so humble himself and was thus made perfect through suffering? He wears, in our view, the form of man. And while we observe his growth from infancy to manhood—see him weary with the toils of the way, or faint under the wants of nature—behold him shedding the tears of hu-

man feeling over the grave of his friend—are present when he bows his head in death, and follow his lifeless body to the tomb;—in all this we witness the evidence of his true humanity. He *was* man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. But he was more than man; and by a sublime series of particulars, as successive texts present them to our wondering notice, the Scriptures conduct us to behold in him the fulness of the Godhead, God manifest in the flesh,—that mysterious union of the divine and human natures in one person, which is expressed in the name, Immanuel, God with us.

The first step towards the full doctrine of the divinity of Christ, may be stated to consist in the very peculiar way in which the Scriptures apply to him the common appellation, Son of God. For every critic in the language of the New Testament is prepared to satisfy you, that he is called by that name in a manner which distinctly marks him out from classification with all other beings in heaven or on earth, who ever are so called; a point which is further confirmed by the frequent addition of "only begotten," to his title of "Son of God," as that addition to the title unquestionably asserts for him a mode of existence solitary and unparalleled. The next step towards the Deity of Christ is made, when we find him praying, that he might be glorified with that glory which he had with his Father before the world was; and when he says, "Before Abraham was, I am." For, in the former case, he carries back the era of his being to an indefinite period previous to creation; and when he says, before Abraham was, *I am*, he evidently intends the words *I am*, in the sense in which Jehovah employed them when he commanded

Moses to say unto Israel, "I am," had sent him, the sense, namely, of underived existence, and so claims for himself the attribute of eternity. A third step is made when St. John, in the beginning of his Gospel, ascribes to him the making of all things that were made, and when St. Paul also speaks of him as upholding and preserving all. For, creation and preservation are alike peculiar works of God, and do equally demand in the Creator and Preserver the power of omnipotence. By such successive steps as these are we led up to the true divinity of Him who was made perfect. And when, lastly, he is declared to have been in the form of God—to be the express image of the divine person, even of the invisible God—and to have thought it no robbery to be equal with God; all escape seems utterly closed from our owning to have been the original and proper nature of Christ, that true Deity which, indeed, breaks forth at times through the veil of his flesh, and which is manifest in the stupendous nature, the ease, the multitude, and the variety of his miracles, and in the power they display alike over the elements of nature, the realms of the dead, and the world of spirits.

2. While thus the Scriptures teach, with an explicitness of terms, by an accumulation of particulars implying it, and by an augmenting proof, such altogether that only the most unfair dealing with the sacred text can evade their force, the full and proper divinity of Christ;—to what a depth of humiliation and suffering did he, as man, descend! It would have been humiliation for him to have assumed at all our mean and sin-degraded nature, even although it had been assumed with all attend-

ant circumstances of state and power that could serve to exalt it in the eyes of its possessors. Much more, however, was it humiliation for the co-equal Son of God to be born an infant of days, of parents so poor that a stable must serve as his place of birth, and a manger for his cradle—to grow up in obscurity from childhood to mature years, being as a son obedient to his parents, and employing the days of ripening strength in working at his reputed father's trade of a carpenter —to be through life a homeless wanderer, who could say, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head"—to have, as the associates of his labours and the companions of his way, only the mean and poor of the earth—to be rejected and despised of men, outcast of his own kindred—and to close a career, on which scorn and contumely were ever attendant, by an ignominious death as a malefactor. Again, to him who had been a dweller in the bosom of all beatitude, such a life in the flesh would have been one of deep humiliation, although nothing of more positive suffering had been added to embitter it. But, besides the obscurity and poverty of condition in which Jesus passed his days, the scorn he met with at the hands of men, and the shame of his death;—he was doomed to know some of the severest pangs that can visit the heart—those arising from the treachery of trusted ones, from the desertion of friends, from the basest ingratitude, from the rejection of offered love:—his it was to shed the tears of afflicted patriotism, and of bereaved friendship;—the sufferings of earthly destitution in every form, of thirst and hunger, of weariness and exhaustion, it was his to expe-

rience—mockery and insult were heaped upon him—and his bodily frame was racked and agonized with the lingering tortures of crucifixion. Nor was this all. Many an unrecorded hour of sorrow was his, so as to realise the words of the mournful prophet, "Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto mine, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me." And go to the garden of Gethsemane, and see where he is in an agony such as forces the blood through the pores of his sacred body, while "with strong crying and tears" he thrice prays, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!"—or place yourselves at the foot of his cross, and hear his agonised cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" and in these recognise the effects and the utterance of a sorrow of soul, indeed unlikened by any mortal sorrow—of afflictions surpassing all his outward and manifest sufferings—of woes pressing upon him, the God-forsaken in his mortal hour, such as, in their mystery, we cannot comprehend.

Now, such are the means, in the first place, instituted of God in the mission, sufferings, and humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ, for which we are to find a suitable and fitting purpose. And well do they bespeak, in their own intrinsic grandeur, the character of importance which that purpose behoves to possess. What, indeed, can exceed in point of inherent magnificence, when regarded in the light of an ordinance of infinite wisdom for some especial end, the advent of Him, who was loftier than the loftiest of all created natures, even the only begotten Son of God, who made all things, the equal of the Father, the Fellow of Jehovah—his advent into our world, to be born and to

grow up as a man, to dwell among men in poverty and sorrow, afflicted beyond the parallel of mortal affliction, and humbled beyond all parallel of humiliation! Approach, ye who would taunt the Christian with the paltriness of his faith. It may, when ye look at the outward guise of its Author, and the condition in life of its first promulgators, appear mean, even as it did to the supercilious Greek of old. But in this, it but resembles the tabernacle of the Israelites, whose outward covering of skins was so void of all imposing appearance that the heathen, who looked only on that covering, might well have been led to form but a humble conception of the Divinity to whose worship it was consecrated; while one glimpse only of the riches and glory within would have served to dispel the illusion, and to inspire him with the most exalted ideas of the God who hallowed the place with his presence. Such a glimpse merely of the interior glories of our religion, has now been given, in teaching you to see under the veil of the Man of Sorrows, the only begotten of the Father. And yet it suffices to show that the Christian is, in his faith, conversant with facts, and doctrines, and ordinations, which impart to it a character of grandeur and magnificence, not only beyond the pretensions of every other religion, but beyond what is found in any other quarter accessible to the human mind, vast as is the field of research!

II. To proceed with our argument. The several ends actually accomplished through the amazing instrumentality which we have been contemplating—exclusive of that of bringing in an eternal salvation—

may be stated to be these:—First, the teaching of men the true doctrine on the subject of God, and Providence, and duty, and a future state; second, the introduction of a pure and spiritual worship, consistent with the doctrine taught of the spirituality and purity of the Divine nature; third, the confirmation of the doctrine of immortality, by Christ's own resurrection from the dead; and fourth, the exhibition of a perfect moral example in the view of mankind. Now all of these purposes were assuredly contemplated by God in that mission of his Son by which they have been effected. All of them, likewise, were most worthy of the Divine benevolence to propose, as they all bore directly and extensively on human happiness. To all of them, moreover, more or less immediately, the mean and suffering condition in which Christ appeared, did most essentially contribute;—opening to the humble Teacher of divine truth that familiar access to, and intercourse with men, from which the kingly preacher would have been excluded—while, at the same time, it encouraged the lowliest born and poorest of the people to come without constraint or awe to judge of his pretensions and learn of his doctrine;—giving to the teacher of a new religion and a pure worship that moral testimony to his honesty and sincerity, which, with some minds outweighs the evidence even of miracles, and the force of which all minds feel, when a moral teacher is beheld persisting in his doctrine in the face of persecution, sufferings and death;—leading down the preacher of immortality to that public death which required to precede a rising from the grave, that was to be a demonstration to all of the fact of another state of exist-

ence;—and supplying to the great Exemplar the occasion of exemplifying those most difficult and most important graces and virtues of character, which have to do with poverty, provocation, pain, and mortal agony.

But notwithstanding all this, we confidently put it to yourselves, whether, looking at the stupendous nature of the means by which these ends are effected—as we have endeavoured to open up a view of their magnificence—you can, however, admit any one of these ends to the acknowledged rank of a suitable and fitting purpose for such a high instrumentality;—whether you do not feel at once compelled to assign to them all but a subordinate place among the purposes of God in appointing that instrumentality;—whether you do not feel constrained to hold the divine wisdom to your view implicated, should no grander purpose still be found to have been in the contemplation of Heaven?

One or other of these two objections seems to apply to all the several ends mentioned, and to decide against their claim to be regarded as *the great chief purpose* of the manifestation of Christ: namely, either that they do not require the introduction of such a person as Jesus Christ in his proper nature was, in order to their accomplishment, or that they leave unnecessary and unjustified the most important of his sufferings, the most remarkable passages of his humiliation. Take, for example, the publishing of a new revelation to the world, and the instituting of a new and pure worship. Is it not felt immediately, that, humanly judging, there was nothing here for which one like unto Moses or St. Paul, in very truth of nature, might not have sufficed;—seeing that what was wanted in the teacher

of a new religion was infallibility, as the organ of divine truth, and a manifest commission from God—the one of which inspiration could supply, and the other, the power of working miracles? Assuredly there seems in this end, all important as it is, no object imperatively demanding the incarnation of the only begotten of the Father.—Or take now, the confirming of our hope of immortality by the personal resurrection from the dead of the authorised Teacher of it. Does it not even appear that, as respects this object, it would have been accomplished in a way more thoroughly satisfying to human feeling and conviction, had He who rose from the grave been altogether such as we—possessor simply of our humanity—of a nature unassociated with that divine nature, to which dissolution is wholly foreign, and life is a necessity?—Or take lastly, the exhibiting of a perfect moral example in the view of mankind;—not to say that neither here is there a purpose absolutely requiring an incarnation of Deity, seeing that even a frail and sinful child of dust was capable of being rendered competent to it through the upholding and sanctifying grace of God—while the example of such an one were even the more commended to us by the assurance we should have of there being no inherent power present which we did not ourselves possess, nor no imparted ability which might not also be given unto us;—passing by this, do we not feel, that while the object of presenting to men a perfect moral example does most certainly justify and demand in Christ all such suffering and affliction as mortal flesh ever experiences under the dispensations of Providence, it yet leaves wholly without a justifying rea-

son, without an evident necessity, all that mysterious and incomprehensible woe of soul, which was peculiar and solitary in the experience of the Man of Sorrows?

Altogether, we are confident of being borne out by the feelings and convictions of every reflecting mind when we say, that, exclusive of the one purpose of effecting an eternal salvation for men,—there is not one among the ends actually served by the advent of Christ in the flesh, which the Godhead of him who came in so mean a guise, and unto a life of such humiliation and suffering, does not at once pronounce as unfitting to be received as the grand purpose of heaven in that high ordination—not one which we are free to think would have called the only begotten of the Father to become a sojourner in our humanity, *had it alone been in the view of infinite wisdom.*

III. But does, then, the purpose of effecting an eternal salvation for men so thoroughly approve itself fit and worthy to be held as the grand prime purpose of God, in the mission of his Son into suffering humanity? Oh! that it were given me to make manifest to you *how thoroughly it does*—to unfold before you the full magnificence of this great purpose of a merciful God, and thus to exhibit its entire correspondence in dignity and importance to the magnificent instrumentality by which it has been accomplished? But the theme of man's salvation is one which employs to the full the powers of angels—for which we have here no faculties adequate — which will supply subject of praise and wonder to the redeemed throughout eternity. When the grandeur of the Christian salvation is our subject of contemplation, then it is, then if ever, that we feel, in

our feebleness of intellectual grasp, as one standing on the shore looking forth upon the ocean. Only a short way do we see forward. Only a few points in the mighty theme come within our range; and even these serve to overpower the mind by the immensity of the field they indicate for the application of the salvation, and the vastness of the interests seen to be involved. Under their light, earth loses its insignificance in the mighty system of creation, and assumes the importance of being the selected theatre of events deeply affecting the interests and happiness of the moral universe.

Think, my brethren, of the native worth of that which was to be saved:—THE SOUL OF MAN—that undying spirit which he received directly from the inspiration of the Almighty—which alone gives nobility to the frame of dust wherein it dwells, and whose abandonment of that earthy tabernacle, is the signal for its breaking down into a mass of corruption—which the Creator has dignified with powers of intelligence so vast, and imbued with aspirations after knowledge and perfection so unbounded—which, exclusively of all his works below, bears, or can bear, the image of God—to which, He gave a value, a grandeur, and a glory, surpassing those of all material things, in conferring upon it that immortality which mocks at the stroke of death, and enables it to behold the sun, and moon, and stars as they shine, and to say, "I shall outlive you all."

Consider the salvation itself, which was to be effected. No mere temporal deliverance was it, affecting alone our present happiness and condition. The evils it contemplated, were nothing less than the ever-

lasting misery and degradation of the soul, its consignment to woe immense and endless, and its exile evermore from the face and favour of God, away among the outcasts from all good. The blessings it had in view, were restoration to the divine love and acceptance, redemption to the true freedom of moral beings, to our lost purity and rectitude—all the high hopes and privileges of the sons of God—and advancement to a place among those who stand in His immediate presence, and to an immortality of inconceivable, still advancing, blessedness.

Consider the vast multitudes of souls who were to benefit from the salvation, as they shall be gathered out of all nations, and from all ages of time. For, to the righteous of all times, and of all kindred and tongues, that should dwell on the face of the earth, was the benefit of the salvation to be extended. Although not until far forward in time, was the Saviour to be manifested, and his saving work to be actually accomplished, and the Gospel of saving mercy to be preached in the ears of men; and although the knowledge of the salvation of God was to be long confined to a narrow district, and to be but slowly diffused over the world, and nations and generations were to rise and disappear, who should never hear thereof; yet not by these circumstances was the divine goodness to be restricted. Back over all antecedent ages—forward to the close of time—and widely as the circle of the earth, were all who should do righteously, striving in faith to walk up to the light afforded them, to receive, in the acceptance of God, the benefit of the great salvation. And how immense, therefore, the throng of immortal souls

whom that salvation should embrace and exalt to people the courts of heaven! "I beheld" says St. John, "and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and cried with a loud voice, salvation to our God."

Consider farther, that the salutary influence of the salvation was not to be confined to earth and man. Revelation, in confirming the conjecture of reason, and making known the fact of the existence of myriads of spiritual beings, of loftier condition and endowment than man, and occupying with their ascending ranks the vast interval betwixt him and the nearest point of approach to the Godhead, yet all possessing the same moral and fallible nature, and owning the same eternal laws of moral obligation—does in this immensely extend the field for the possible influence of the salvation, of which *we* are the immediate objects. Not, indeed, in the way of an actual redemption, such as it brings to our sinful race. For, although of these higher intelligences we are told, that many fell and were exiled from the presence of God; yet are we also told, that sovereign mercy vouchsafes not its grace to them. Not then to redeem, and save, might the influence of the salvation to be provided for man, extend beyond him and his necessities to angelic natures; but to confirm and establish in their allegiance to the sovereign Lord of all, those of them who were yet unfallen—and to do this, by exhibiting to their view an awful warning of the guilt and offence of disobedience, and an illustration more solemn and fearful than yet they had beheld, of the high evil of sin—by this on the

one hand, and on the other, by drawing yet more closely their love and devotedness to the God they serve, by still loftier manifestations of his goodness and mercy.

Still farther, consider the high ends which the salvation was to serve in the divine government: that it was to reconcile and recover an alienated and disaffected province of the wide kingdom of God—that it was to vindicate, in the view of all, the outraged authority of the Supreme — that it was to uphold the sanctity and obligation of the divine laws—that it was to render the exercise of clemency and forgiveness, consistent with the claims of eternal justice, and with the holiness of the divine nature.

And lastly, consider, that there were things required in order to the salvation, which transcended the powers of created natures. For these things were required ere man could be saved :—that the temporary sufferings of him who should, by such sufferings, be perfected as our Saviour, should be of atoning value, equivalent to the everlasting woe of sin's incurred penalty—that he should have life at his own independent disposal, to lay down and take again, as holding it not at the gift or command of another—and that, as neither needing atonement for himself, nor bound himself to render obedience in what might be required of him, he should thus have the power to take the place of man, and on man's behalf to merit at the Divine Hand, by bearing all penalty, and fulfilling all righteousness. These things were required in order to man's salvation—things, all most manifestly beyond the competency of a creature. For it is, on the contrary, of the essence of created nature, to hold exis-

tence of another, and at another's will. Nor can a creature merit for a fellow-creature in God's view; or do more than discharge his own personal debt of duty. While an infinity of nature in the vicarious sufferer, can alone render his surety sufferings of limited duration, equal to a penal woe everlasting. In this way, the task of saving man becomes what only one who is Divine, in the strictest sense of the word as meaning Deity, could undertake.

And now, lay together these considerations thus separately mentioned,—each one serving to enhance the importance and the grandeur of the Christian salvation, until it becomes what only a divine person is competent to—and then say, brethren, if that salvation, *regarded as* THE END *proposed to be effected by the stupendous instrumentality found to be instituted in the humiliation and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ*, do not possess an importance and grandeur of character, all worthy of that instrumentality?—If it do not possess such a corresponding magnificence, end to means, as entirely to justify the Divine Wisdom in its institution? Such cannot fail, we are confident, to be your conviction. You cannot refuse to acknowledge, that that to which Deity only was competent, was a fitting purpose for means which include an incarnation of Deity: any more than you can refuse to acknowledge, that all the other purposes actually served by that incarnation, are inadequate in respect of dignity and importance of character, as not presenting an occasion demanding the employment of such means.

Thus, then, are we conducted by the path of argu-

ment which we have pursued, leading from a consideration of the divine wisdom, as seen in the economy of creation,—to a conclusion corroborative in the most direct manner of the doctrine of the text, which also is the pervading doctrine of Holy Scripture ;—the doctrine, namely, that the Son of God was perfected by suffering, that he might be the author of an eternal salvation for man — that this was the one great chief object in the view of God, in his advent and humiliation. Until we adopt this as the grand leading purpose of God in that advent, Infinite wisdom seems chargeable with the inconsistency of having had recourse to means of unequalled importance for the attainment of objects comparatively inconsiderable—of objects for which greatly less important means would, as seems to us, have sufficed. While, when we do take the purpose of saving men as the prime purpose of Christ's manifestation, all is felt to be in perfect harmony—all is acknowledged to be worthy of Him, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

Brethren, observe in conclusion the admonitory words of the text—the Son of God was made perfect, that he might become the author of eternal salvation *to all them that obey him ;*—meaning thereby, to those who render him the obedience of faith, when he asks the committal of the soul's trust to him as a Redeemer, and who, out of that faith as a principle operating in the heart, obey him also when, as Lord and Master, he prescribes the law of life, and, as Example and Guide, calls to follow in his footsteps and to imitate his excellence.

See to it, then, that such obedience ye be careful to render. Ye require not to be reminded of your need of salvation. Neither do ye require to be reminded of the utter insufficiency of all within your own resources to effect salvation for you. That to provide that salvation was the great purpose of the coming and the humiliation of the Son of God, has just been evinced in harmony with the pervading testimony of Holy Scripture. And the same fact of the Godhead of the Saviour on which our argument is based, will serve to assure you of these three things farther:—that there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby ye can be saved but his —that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto him—and that a salvation to effect which the Son of God travailed in mortal suffering, is not to be slighted or rejected with impunity, yea, without incurring a "sorer punishment."

Oh then, see to it, that ye be of those who obey him. Let there be no negligence or indifference with you about a matter of such unspeakable importance. Behold, now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation. Soon and unexpectedly may that day close—may that accepted time come to an end. And even should it not terminate with you by a premature or sudden call to an eternal world—oh! remember, there is such a thing as the withdrawal of grace neglected, the ceasing of the vexed and slighted Spirit of God to strive with men. Fear ye this. And while yet that Spirit waiteth to help, give all diligence that ye indeed obey him, who was "made perfect, that he might become to them who obey him the author of eternal salvation." Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE WORD OF GOD LIKENED TO THE RAIN.

BY THE

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ISAIAH lv. 10, 11.

"*For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*"

The spirit of prophecy appears to have been given to Esaias in a larger measure than to most of the other prophets; at least, his perception of the glory of

the latter days is much clearer, and his language more explicit, than what is to be found in the greater part of the writings of the Old Testament. Having, in a preceding chapter, foretold most distinctly the sufferings of Messiah, and the glory that was to follow, the prophet presses on mankind their acceptance of the blessings of salvation, in all their fulness, and in all their freeness. Religion is represented as most necessary to the life of a rational being, and as most conducive to his highest enjoyments. To enhance in their estimation its value, none are excluded from its benefits but those who exclude themselves; nay, "where sin had abounded, grace is shewn much more to abound." There is in us a strong reluctance to forgive those who have offended us, and we are disposed to regard our Maker in the way of pardoning such an one as ourselves. But "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are his ways as ours; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than ours." While the majesty of God might well cause us to tremble before him as transgressors of his holy law, his promises contain whatever can encourage the most timid—and the ordinary course of providence proclaims his goodness and his power over all nature. Did not experience place the matter beyond doubt, we would never have expected in the kingdom of nature such mighty results from means so simple, and, as we may think, so unlikely to accomplish the end; but there is no reasoning against facts. With regard to religion, as the Saviour appeared to a misjudging

world as "a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness, wherefore men should desire him," and, as accordingly, "he was rejected and despised of men," in a similar light may that instrument be regarded, which God has appointed for causing men to partake of the blessings of salvation. But, what experience teaches us to expect in the ordinary course of nature, so must faith teach us with regard to those channels in which salvation is to flow into our souls. The rain that descends from the clouds, and by means of which the earth is refreshed and rendered fruitful; considered in itself, is utterly ineffectual for the purpose, deriving all its virtue from him who saith to it, "be thou upon the earth." Yet, as his agent, how mighty are the results that are thus bestowed upon animated nature. The Word of God, spoken from the mouth of a fellow-creature, considered as the word of him by whom it is uttered, could never break the hard and stony heart, and make the tears of godly sorrow to flow, and the fruits of a holy life to abound, and the hope of immortality to revive the drooping spirit: but this Word, in the hand of the Spirit, effects all this and more than this, and becomes that food that nourishes the soul unto eternal life: "for as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The Word of God, at the time when this prophet wrote, contained only what is found in the Old Testament; imperfect indeed was the canon of Scripture, compared with that with which we are favoured in these latter days. Of these Old Testament Scriptures, the Psalmist speaks very highly, as does the prophet Esaias in this chapter; and in illustration of the text, if we extend our view to the writings of the New Testament, which we cannot avoid, it will appear, we hope, still more obvious, in what respects the similitude of the Word to the rain and to the snow, holds good. In what respect may the Word of God be compared to rain.

1. In regard to its origin.

It would be quite out of place, though one was qualified, to enter upon any philosophical disquisition with regard to the process of vegetation. The procedure is well-known to the humblest husbandman. He sees the means that are employed, and he knows the effects that are thus produced; and these premises are quite sufficient for arriving at the conclusion which we have in view. The snow, which, when it descends from the higher regions of the air, becomes rain, is a wonderful provision of Providence for "causing grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the use of man." Like our daily mercies, when freely and seasonably bestowed, its nature is not appreciated; we are apt to regard it as a common occurrence, without thinking of him who "causeth the clouds to drop down rain;" but when this blessing has been long withheld — when the clouds have become as brass and iron, and the face

of nature presents a parched appearance—then are our eyes earnestly directed to the heavens, if so we can descry the signs of its approach.

The rain, like " every good and perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." The Word can trace its origin from the same source; and as the evidence of the source of the rain is obvious to our senses, so the evidence of the origin of the Word is no less satisfactory to those who have given it that careful study to which it is so well entitled. It is just as impossible in the nature of things, that the Word could have originated with any creature, more especially with those who are so degraded as we are, as it would be for the rain to come from any other quarter than the clouds, in consistency with those laws by which the material creation is governed. Without adverting to that host of evidence which it adduces in favour of the high origin to which it lays claim, arising from miracles and from prophecy, from its rapid propagation in the face of the most formidable opposition, it has evidence in itself sufficient to satisfy every serious reflecting mind that it has come from God. Its nature and tendency are so opposite to the depraved heart and life of man, that it is manifest it could never have been his production, as this would be to make a cause produce an effect different from and superior to itself. Good men would not have given out their own opinions as the oracles of the living God; and before such a work could have come from bad men, " the Ethiopean must have changed his skin and the leopard his spots." The

same thing may be said of good and bad angels; and, therefore, as the Word could not, in the nature of things, have proceeded from any creature, we are driven to the conclusion that it is the work of the Creator.

This evidence, which is quite sufficient for the honest mind, is not found so effectual for those who are of a sceptical disposition; and, therefore, along with this, which has been called the internal evidence for the truth of the Word, such persons are directed to the external; and from both of these taken together, if the mind is not convinced of the truth of the Scriptures, we may safely affirm, that to it no evidence whatever would have been satisfactory. We may say in the words of Scripture, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they have been persuaded though one rose from the dead."

The heart of man may rebel against the purity of those precepts which the Word inculcates, and may endeavour to put away from it those curses which it denounces against all who live ungodly; but the understanding of every man in his sound senses must admit, that the law which it contains is "holy, just, and good," and that it is the bounden duty of the creature to obey the Creator. His conscience, too, will reiterate and corroborate all those threatenings which it contains with regard to a future state of punishment for the ungodly. The evidence for the origin of the Word may not be of that overpowering and irresistible kind that the infidel requires; but it is of the very kind, and much more satisfactory than that upon which he himself acts in the most important concerns of life, without

the least hesitation. "He that believeth has the witness in himself;" so that we may say, in the words of the apostle upon the subject,—"if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." "Thus as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, is the Word that goeth out of the mouth of God."

2. The Word may be compared to rain, from its adaptation to the end which it is intended to serve. The rain that descends from above, softens and subdues the stubborn clod; it furnishes food for the whole vegetable kingdom, and thus also for the animal kingdom; it mollifies and warms the atmosphere—and as it is the means of dissipating those clouds of cold that intercept the genial rays of the sun, it is no less necessary for the progress and perfection of vegetation than the sun in all his glory. One of the finest objects in nature is the appearance which the earth presents after having been saturated with rain, when warmed and invigorated by the rays of the sun; and accordingly the Messiah is thus represented, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining after the rain."

The Word of God is no less fitted for all those purposes of enlightening, convincing, converting, and comforting for which it is sent. Of this Word, even under the dark dispensation in which he lived, the Psalmist thus speaks,—"The law of the Lord is perfect, con-

verting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey comb; moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in the keeping of them there is a great reward." And (these are) the words of the apostle who lived under the clearer light of the New Testament,—" The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word is admirably suited to the condition of fallen man; it finds him ignorant of what it concerns him chiefly to know, and it leads him to the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ, whom to know savingly is eternal life. It finds him guilty and overpowered with a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, and it says to him, with the authority of its Author, " believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" it finds him struggling with an evil heart of unbelief and with the temptations of an evil spirit; and it " lifts up his eyes to the hills whence cometh his aid;" it says, " my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It finds him groaning under the ills of life; mourning over his disappointments, and lamenting the death of those who were near

and dear to him; and it bids him dry up his tears, while it administers strong consolation; it finds him beset with evil upon the right hand and the left—placed in a dark world, where he must walk by faith and not by sight; and it becomes "a light to his feet and a lamp to his path, even a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn and the day star arise in his heart;" it finds him afraid to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death, and it puts into his hand the rod and staff of the Almighty, and cheers his departing spirit by unfolding those bright regions of immortality which lie beyond death and the grave. Its precepts are so plain that he who runs may read; the great truths necessary to salvation are level to any ordinary capacity: the Word is suited to man in every situation as the descendant of Adam, and as involved in all the melancholy consequences of his transgression; it has milk for babes and strong meat for strong men; it has warnings for the thoughtless, reproofs for the ungodly, instructions for the ignorant, comfort for the mourners, immortality for the dying. And well may they be said to be "blessed who know its joyful sound;" it contains whatever is absolutely necessary to comfort men in this vale of tears—a revelation of the merciful intentions of God towards our guilty race; and not more refreshing and fructifying is the rain to the parched ground, and to the stunted grass, than is the Word that goeth out of the mouth of the Lord, to bless sinful creatures with present comfort, and to give them good hope through grace.

3. The Word may be likened to the rain, with regard

to the manner of its operation. The falling of the rain from the clouds in small drops is a remarkable instance of the wisdom of Him who is perfect in knowledge. When, at any time, as in the case of storms, it descends in torrents, this truth appears to us more obvious, as then, instead of refreshing the vegetable tribes, it carries desolation in its train. With regard to the manner in which it operates in the growth of plants, we know almost nothing. Our Saviour says, "So, is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise, day and night; and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how." The process is almost imperceptible to our senses; there is no indication that any change is taking place; there is not the most distant whisper that meets the ear: and yet "the face of the earth is renewed; the springing of the earth is blessed; the paths of God drop fatness, and the year is crowned with his goodness!" Such, in general, is the manner in which the Word operates upon the heart of man. The Spirit of God worketh where, and when, and how he pleaseth, by the Word generally, yet not always—sometimes by alarming dispensations of providence, and sometimes by the voice of conscience speaking within us. There have been extraordinary operations of the Spirit at different times, more especially was that of this character which took place upon the day of Pentecost. We read, "that when the disciples were gathered together, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind; and it filled the house where they were sitting; and

there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." There have been in the Church at different times what have been called seasons of revival, in which the operation of the Word has appeared in a manner more striking to the senses than is generally the case; and we cannot limit the power of God, nor those agents which he is pleased to employ. But regarding his Word as the great instrument for convincing and converting sinners, and for building up saints through faith unto salvation, in its ordinary operations, the resemblance to the rain will be found to hold good. It is silent in its manner of working; "it is like leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal;" but it possesses the wonderful property of converting that to which it is introduced into its own nature; by the leaven the whole lump is leavened. So, where the Word is accompanied with power from on high, "it is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The Word of God is the great means which he employs for the salvation of sinners; the rain is the great means which he employs for the fructifying the earth: in the ordinary course of providence, the one acts in a gradual imperceptible manner; in the ordinary course of his grace, this is the way in which the other operates. When the mind is mightily affected, its feelings will often be manifested

in the outward frame. Thus was it when Peter preached the Word to the Jews upon the day of Pentecost; which Word was so carried to their consciences, that they could not conceal their feelings. When they heard it, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "men and brethren, what shall we do?" and when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come before Felix, neither could he conceal his feelings, "he trembled." These were the effects of the Word; its operation upon the inner man was not visible, nor audible, nor perceptible. Yet it was effectual in the one case just quoted for conviction, and in the other for conversion and salvation. It was foretold of the Saviour, "That he should not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets; that he should not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Yet that he should bring forth judgment unto victory." And Moses thus speaks of the Word of God, which, by the Spirit, he was to utter:—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass." In accordance with these statements, we read, "That when our Saviour was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, or outward show; neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there, for behold the kingdom of God is within you." Thus, it comes to pass, that we often form very erroneous notions with regard to the working of the Word of God upon ourselves and upon others. Thus it comes

to pass, that all those who are not sincere in their religious profession, are remarkable for their love of show and ostentation; and this love of distinction is not always entirely removed, even from those in whose heart we have reason to believe the Spirit of God dwells. But our Saviour cautions us, when he compares the operation of the Spirit to the wind, to judge of the reality of its power from the effects which it produces; so by likening the Word to the rain, while we are indirectly reminded not to pry with an idle curiosity into the manner of its working, are we directed to attend to those benefits, which, in the case of the people of God, it never fails to bestow. Therefore,

4. The Word is likened to rain in this respect—"It watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." The great benefits that flow to the people of God from the Word, are set forth under the figures of bread to the eater, and seed to the sower; or, in other words, present support and future provision. In the kingdom of nature, the rain is the agent employed for causing grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the use of man. It is, however, but an agent or instrument, deriving all its virtue from him whose creature it is; and had it been his pleasure, the same result might have been effected, independently of the use of this or any other means. In the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the end was attained without the intervention of any instrument. But generally without rain, there is no crop; it is as necessary to the vegetable tribes as food is to animals.

In the work of conversion and sanctification, there are generally means employed to accomplish the end; and among these the Word holds a distinguished place. Upon what does our bodily life depend? upon that nourishment which is yielded from the earth. The meat that perishes, at once supports the body and ministers to its enjoyment, and fits for the discharge of its proper duties; similar is the office which the Word of God renders to the life of God in the soul of man, "it gives bread to the eater." That bread, that inward satisfaction and comfort which are so desirable to the heart of man, cannot be obtained from the present world. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." But "happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding, for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." The Word of God informs us of the way of salvation; of that "bread of life that came down from heaven, that a man eat thereof and not die." It acquaints us with Him, "who though rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich;" with the merit of his life, and the efficiency of his death, and the prevalence of his intercession; it calls upon us with a voice from heaven, to believe the testimony which God has borne to his own Son, and it ensures our salvation. What blessing under heaven is to be compared to that peace of mind which Jesus died to purchase and lives to bestow? Food is grateful to him that is hungry, and water to him who is ready to perish; but neither of these blessings yield that satisfaction which is theirs "who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Such

being justified by faith, have peace with God; they have the true enjoyment of that nature which God has given them; "all things are theirs, whether things present or things to come, whether life or death." Prosperity increases their gratitude, and causes them to seek after a better portion than what this world can bestow. Affliction, by drying up the streams of worldly comfort, quickens their desires and endeavours for those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand. Of the Word they can say,—"This is my comfort in mine affliction, for thy Word has quickened me; thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." This Word dwells in them richly; thus are they thoroughly furnished unto all good works; and while they have more joy than others when their corn and wine do abound, their prospects are not bounded by time, they reach to eternity. The Word gives seed to the sower. It has that meat to bestow which endureth into everlasting life. It assures us, upon the testimony of Him who cannot lie, "that there remains a rest to the people of God," it thus opens to us a portion of that veil which conceals the invisible world; it informs us of the employment and joys of its heavenly inhabitants, and causes us to long to join their society. It has many a word of comfort to say to us in our journey thitherward—while it never fails to represent their character for whom this kingdom is prepared, declaring, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It insists upon those who cherish the hope of heaven, to make preparation for its joys; and maintains, that "if any man is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is

deceiving his own soul." In urging upon believers the necessity of holiness, and furnishing the most powerful motives, the Word confers upon them true blessedness, inasmuch as such as are holy have evidence in themselves that they have not received the grace of God in vain; inasmuch as they are warranted to apply to themselves the promises; and although the bare knowledge of salvation does not ensure its enjoyment, yet in the case of the people of God, such is the connection between the end and the means, that our Saviour says, "this is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent."

5. The Word may be likened to rain, with regard to the certainty of its producing the intended effect. We have already adverted to its admirable fitness for this purpose—we are now to attend to the effects which it never fails to accomplish. "It shall accomplish that which I please, saith the Lord, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Indeed, such a result might have been confidently expected, when we consider the agent, and the instrument in his hand. The Scriptures afford numberless proofs of the truth we are endeavouring to illustrate. What was the condition of the heathen before the publication of the Gospel: "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." How came it to pass that the Jews greatly surpassed all the world upon the score of religious knowledge? we have the answer in these words, "God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets." What was the state of the world at the time when our Saviour

appeared? "The world in its wisdom knew not God," men were "living without God and without hope." To what is the change in every point of view, which since that period has taken place, to be traced? To the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. The Word has indeed been, what the Apostle said was the object of his ministry; it has opened men's eyes, and in so doing, it "has turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." When the Word of the Gospel was preached with power from on high, Satan was seen as lightning falling from heaven; idolatry with its cruel train fled before the light of truth; and the change which the truth effected, was almost literally what Esaias predicted, "the wilderness and the solitary place were glad, and the desert did rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The age of miracles has long since passed away, but God never changes. "Jesus Christ is the same yestefday, to-day, and for ever." "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Still the Word worketh mightily in them that believe—it convinces them of sin—it converts the soul—it unites to Christ, and it thus blesses with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him. It may fall like the rain, in situations where it seems to be lost; nevertheless it will accomplish the pleasure of God, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it. By it is the knowledge of sin, and also the knowledge of salvation—by it is the purpose of God in election accomplished, for if some are chosen from the beginning, "it is through sanctification of the

Spirit and belief of the truth; it affords comfort to many an afflicted, tempted, mourning soul—but its worth must be experienced in order to be known or appreciated. By a single sermon of the Apostle Peter, about three thousand souls were added to the Church; and though the effects of the Word may not always be so visibly demonstrated, still "as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so is the word that goeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

With regard to the rain, much of it falls in the sea, and in places where it appears to us to be of no use, nevertheless it accomplishes the intentions of providence: and as respects many that hear the Word, it profits them not, not being mixed with faith in the hearing; yet the will of God cannot be frustrated. Esaias received this message from God. "Go and tell this people; hear ye, indeed, but understand not; see ye, indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and be healed." In this bold language is foretold, not indeed the primary design of the Word of God—but, in consequence of their depravity to whom it is sent, their fate. It was predicted of Christ, "this child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel:" we read that "none of the wicked shall understand, but that the wise shall understand."

By what mysterious decree of God such things come to pass, we cannot say; but the Scripture is clear as to the fact—yet from all that we know of God we believe, that the ruin of men's souls is to be traced entirely to themselves. Jesus said to the Jews, "ye will not come to me, that ye may have life," and the Apostle says, "that because men receive not the truth in the love of it, God shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie, that they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

The Word of God is like certain medicines—the disease that it does not heal, it festers; the soul that it does not save, it leaves entirely without hope of mercy. So says the Apostle Paul of the effects of his preaching; "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are a savour of death unto death, and to the other a savour of life unto life." The Word of God will not return unto him void. Is it to be thought, that after such preparation for the salvation of sinners, the message of the Gospel will be rejected with impunity? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."

How shall we ascertain whether the Word is preparing us for glory, or for eternal misery? By the effects which it is now working upon our hearts and lives; by its producing in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness; by its removing our fears, and confirming our hopes, and quickening us in the way that conducts to heaven; for assuredly "the kingdom of

God is not in word but in power:" it has its seat in the heart, which it purifies from all filthiness in the flesh and in the Spirit, and its power is manifest in the whole of the life and conversation.

6. The Word may be likened to rain, inasmuch as its efficacy depends entirely upon the divine blessing. The rain, as already observed, is but an instrument which God is pleased to use, in order to answer a certain end. It is He—as David has said—"that visiteth the earth and watereth it, that greatly enricheth it with the river of God, which is full of water, and maketh it soft with showers, and blesseth the springing of the earth;" and without his blessing the fruitful land would become a wilderness; without his blessing, the tree planted by the rivers of water, would be as "the heath in the wilderness, that doth not see when good cometh:" so would the Word be without the influence of the Spirit. The epistles of the Apostles are most explicit on this subject. Even in their days the disciples had begun to form themselves into different parties, under different teachers, which conduct, so far from being evidence of their religion, proved them to be carnal; "for while one saith, I am of Paul, and another of Apollos, are ye not carnal? who then is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man: I have planted, Apollos hath watered, but God gave the increase; so neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth anything, but God that gave the increase."

Without admitting the doctrine of divine influences,

it is impossible to account for the different effects produced by the same Word, preached by the same person, upon different hearers. Who is it but God that maketh the difference? He acts in a free and sovereign manner, but according to his unerring wisdom. In the distribution of his favours, both in the kingdoms of providence and of grace, he often giveth none account of his conduct to any: and what should this doctrine teach us, but to be earnest in prayer, for that blessing that maketh the means profitable for the intended end. It should teach us also, not to place means, or ministers, or ordinances, in the place of him whose instruments these are: and if this doctrine of divine influence had been more regarded, there is reason to believe, that much of the late division in our Church would never have existed to disturb its peace. God often acts quite contrary to our expectations, "he maketh the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

If the Word of God will not profit us without the Spirit of God—if no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Spirit; and if the working of the Spirit is irresistible; then in the reading or hearing of the Word, we should place ourselves in the position of suppliants at the footstool of his throne, accounting his blessing as the one thing needful, and desirous that in the whole of our salvation he may have all the glory. The in-

will and prepared not himself to do it, was commanded to be beaten with many stripes. It is not the hearers of the law that are just before God, but the doers of the law that are justified. This Word is now given to be the rule of our conduct, and it is that standard by which we will be tried in the great and terrible day of the Lord. "Thy word," says the Psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee;" and then he prays, "Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes; open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

SERMON VIII.

WORLDLINESS THE SIN OF LOST SOULS UNDER THE GOSPEL.

BY THE

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2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

"*But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*"

After all then, Brethren, you perceive from this text, after all, there will be lost souls. It cannot be otherwise. Under this decided impression, horrible, revolting, tremendous as is the thought, to every man who

weighs in the balances of eternity the worth of immortal souls, every minister of the Gospel must commence, must carry on his ministry. Although Paul himself preach, and, with all the authority and all the faithfulness of a heaven-inspired ambassador of the cross, commend himself, by manifestation of the Gospel truth, to every man's conscience in the sight of God, (verse 2,) that Gospel which he preaches will to some be hid, and the consequence to these is inevitable perdition. The thought is enough to stagger and appal the most resolute heart; for who that has the heart of a Christian minister can look abroad on the congregation and people committed to his charge, and become accustomed to see them from sabbath to sabbath in the House of God, and during the week familiar with their faces and their families as a father and a friend, till the name of each, from the infant that was born yesterday to the man of grey hairs that is tottering over the grave, is learned and comes without an effort to his lips, and the welfare of each, from the highest to the lowest of his charge, is the object ever present, ever uppermost in his soul, the subject of his perpetual prayer, and the task for accomplishing which he rejoices to spend his strength, yet sit down at last with the conviction, with the certainty, of damnation being the portion of one of his immortal flock? One of those among whom he has gone in and out—one whose name he knows—one to whom he has proclaimed the great salvation—whom he has warned, exhorted, entreated by the blood of Christ, by the grace of God, by the nearness and glory of the kingdom of heaven—shut

out, eternally cast out from heaven, and, with the devil and the reprobate, cast eternally into hell! What a consideration, although there were but one! One Judas methinks would be enough to make the minister like his Master, a man of sorrows. But oh! it is not over one that he is called to weep. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" was the lamentation of the Saviour. Multitudes—the multitude of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were those to whom, seeing the end from the beginning, he said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Whether the minister who has the mind of Christ, and surveys with the same eye of commiseration the lost and wandering sheep who refuse to return to the fold, will have cause to take up the same lamentation over his flock, when he reads the future condition of the people of his charge in the present character which they exhibit to the world; and whether the lost who would not be saved, be now, as in the Saviour's day, and under the Saviour's ministry, the multitude, or be the few, while the many are now heirs of salvation, let the text determine.

From this you learn, and shall, I trust, this day, by the demonstration of the Spirit, learn—

1st, That the Gospel of Christ is light and glory, which, revealing Christ as the image of God, shines, where it is effectual to salvation, into the heart, and, transforming the soul into the image of God, makes the carnal man spiritual, and the sinner a saint.

The Gospel is the revelation of God, or of the glory of God, to fallen man. Addressed to sinners it brings, it is glad tidings of great joy, because it announces the glorious fact, that love to sinners is the glory of God, and that it is by the manifestation of this love on his part, and by the belief of this manifested love on the sinner's part, that God, in the character of Saviour, is glorified. In the Gospel we see the invisible God. He appears there, and perhaps there alone, as He is, in the full blaze of unclouded perfection, "light in which there is no darkness at all;" so that the principalities and powers of heaven, the seraphim that stand nearest to the eternal throne, when they would discover the manifold wisdom and other infinite excellencies of him whom they delight to serve, stoop, we are assured, from their thrones on high, and desire to look into the things respecting Christ which are now revealed by the Spirit to the Church on earth. The mystery of godliness, God manifest in flesh, is, not only to sinners on earth, but to the saints and seraphim and general assembly of the Church in heaven, the brightest display of Deity. What is the work of creation to the work of redemption, when the Creator stoops to become the Redeemer! Creation in all its infinite range, magnificent as are its forms, and splendid the testimony which through these it silently raises to the majesty and might of the Author of the universe, is but the stupendous theatre which the word of the Almighty has framed, for displaying in another more glorious work, the incarnation, the humiliation, the glorification of his only-begotten Son, the still

more stupendous mystery of redeeming love. Love, redeeming love, holy love, is that in which he will be glorified; and therefore all that magnifies the thunder of his power, or manifests the length and breadth of his wisdom, his justice, his holiness, or his perfection in other respects, whether in creation or the administration of Providence, must, as subordinate and subservient, give place to that which makes known the love that passeth knowledge, in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and height. That manifestation of the love of God is made in Christ the Saviour. Christ is the image of the invisible God. Christ manifest in the flesh is the manifestation of God in his glory to the world; and in Christ as he lived, and Christ as he died and rose again from the dead, in the life and death and resurrection of Christ, we behold a perfect revelation of God — we see unfolded that which it concerns us most as accountable immortals to know — the disposition with which in the Gospel we, although hell-deserving sinners, are regarded by the God with whom, as hell-deserving sinners, we have all to do. The mind of Christ is the revelation of the mind of God. The work of Christ in all its parts is the revelation of the mind of God; and every part of that work, from the cradle to the cross, is, according as the mind of Christ was therein developed, a new and constantly increasing development of love that passeth knowledge to the souls of sinful men. It was to sinners, not to the righteous, that He came. It was to those who were burdened with the direful consequences of sin, the

blind, the lame, the withered, the leprous, and the dead that He ministered, and in behalf of such that He exerted his divine power in performing miracles; it was to the lost, whom He came to seek and to save, that He preached the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven; and there was not one—not one—of the inhabitants of Judea and Galilee among whom He went about doing good whom He did not invite, command, and intreat to enter into that kingdom which He proclaimed thrown open in the Gospel to all. Look, then, at Jesus going about doing good and healing all that were possessed of the devil, if you would see the disposition of the God and Father of Christ towards those who, as sinners, are under the devil's power. That love which He manifested to every child of affliction, that willingness, that readiness, that eagerness which He displayed to remove every disease from every sufferer who solicited his aid, that no respect of persons and of characters which He showed, whether the suppliant was a nobleman or a beggar by the way, a publican or a harlot, a pharisee or a sadducee, that rejection of none, not one, who came to be healed, was but an indication of that love which He bears to every soul that is under the dominion of sin, of that willingness, that readiness, that eagerness which He proclaims to remove from every sinner the plague of his heart, and of that freeness of grace which, without respect of persons or qualifications, is published as alike extended to all, whatever be the name or the character which they bear, since all, as lost, have alike need to become partakers of the great salvation. That work, from beginning to end, is

to the world of sinners a pledge that no sinner, be his disease or character what it may, will be cast out, or is by anything on God's part excluded, from full participation in all the blessings of the Gospel. But it was on the cross, where the work of humiliation and atonement was completed, that the mind of God to man in the Gospel was most apparent, and it is to Christ on the cross that the sinner is commanded to look who would see the God of the Gospel as He is, and learn that the God of the Gospel is love. (1 John iv. 10.) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." That blood of atonement which was shed on the cross cleanseth from all sin, and therefore the command of the Gospel is, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29.) Behold your God! (Isa. xl. 9). "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isaiah xlv. 22.)

Such is the image of God which we behold in Christ. The glory of Christ, (John i. 14,) is the fulness of grace and truth, with which, as the only-begotten Son of God, he came into the world—and in that fulness of grace and truth, as it was exhibited in his doctrine, his miracles, his life, and his death, we behold the image of God, the disposition which he manifests towards the fallen race of men, inviting them, on the ground of Christ's finished work, to confidence, and assuring them in Christ, of pardon, reconciliation, peace, and all the blessings of eternal life. This glory of Christ is, in the text, declared to be the Gospel

which shines into the sinner's heart, by the illumination of which he is saved and sanctified. This only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth, is the Saviour, who, from the throne of heaven, to which he is exalted as a Prince, to grant repentance and remission of sins, has sent forth, and is sending forth, the Spirit of love, and power, and light, with which he is anointed, to anoint his followers, to reveal the things that are freely given us of God, to apply the promises and calls of his Word, to witness with our spirits in believing that we are the children of God, and give us, thus sealed, the earnest of that inheritance, into the full possession of which we are to enter on the day of redemption.

This glory of Christ is the light which the sinner sees, on which, shining around in the Gospel, he opens his eyes, and to which every sinner is commanded to look; and it is light, a great light, to the soul that was formerly, through ignorance of God, in darkness, deep and dense, as the shadow of death. This light reveals to the sinner, who formerly, like Adam, fled in the consciousness of guilt from the presence of a holy God, and sought to banish, to bury, if it were possible, the thought of that God whom he regarded with suspicion and aversion, this reveals a message of special, particular, personal love. This, when he hears the gracious words that proceed from the Saviour's mouth, as he issues the Gospel call, "Come unto me,"—"turn O backsliding children, return, for I am merciful," this emboldens him to draw near, and return to the fountain of living waters which he had forsaken; and when, returning, in the light of this Saviour's counte-

nance, he beholds, contrasted with this gracious love, the sins which he has committed, and the plague and pollution of his heart, above all, when he sees the guilt of rejecting so gracious a Saviour, and neglecting, as he has hitherto done, so great a salvation, this humbles him in the dust before God, and fills him with the sorrow and shame of Gospel repentance. Through this the love of God is shed abroad on his heart, and believing in this love, he enters into peace. He is reconciled. He sees God. He rejoices in God.

Nor is this all. That which is light is also glory to the Christian. When the Sun of Righteousness thus arises on his heart, and chases away the shadows of the night, and the clouds which prevented him from beholding the face of God, God shines forth unveiled before his eyes, and manifests, in the character of his reconciled Father, in the light of the covenant, all the glory of his perfections. Then, in the light of love, the sinner, for the first time, dares in earnest to look upon God, and then, for the first time, beholds in Christ the justice, holiness, wisdom, and majesty of God. Nowhere but in the cross of Christ does he see these united harmoniously, "Mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other." This God is my God! is the exclamation of his enraptured soul, as he gazes and gazes on the glorious sight, and in this marvellous light, when he looks abroad, whether on the works of creation or of providence, all things in connection with this God become new, and like God, with whom they are now associated, all are glorious. He sees the glory of the New Creation.

But what is most glorious, he himself is a new creature. That love which he contemplates, when it is shed abroad on his heart by the Holy Ghost, has a transforming power which makes the beholder like the God whom he loves. The image of God, which he beholds in Christ, is reflected back from his own heart, on which it is formed in visible characters of living light. The man, in proportion as he sees the light of Christ's glory, becomes a living epistle of Christ, " For we all, (2 Cor. iii. 18,) with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The old man is thus put off and the new man put on, and when the glory of the kingdom of heaven is seen, as it is revealed in the Gospel, near at hand, he who before loved the world and the things of the world, and sought his happiness without regard to God, or in opposition to God, in " the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," dies to the flesh, " reckons himself dead to sin," (Rom. vi. 11,) and, through the cross of Christ, is crucified to the world, that he may live unto God. He takes the place of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, who has risen with Jesus Christ to newness of life. The knowledge of God in Christ is to him eternal life. (John xvii. 3.) To see God, and be like God, is his blessedness here, and his highest hope of blessedness in heaven.

Such is the Christian who sees the glory of Christ. Why are not all, to whom the Gospel is preached, such? The answer of the text, to which I now call

your attention in the *second* place, is distinct and definite. It proclaims,—

II. That where this is not the realized character of the Gospel, rejection of the Gospel truth respecting Christ, through the unbelief of the sinner's heart resisting God, is the cause, and that this resistance and rejection are to be traced to the blinding effect of Satanic agency.

"If this Gospel is hid," says the text,—"where the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, does not shine, it is in the minds of those that believe not; and the minds of these are blinded, or kept from seeing the light, by the god of this world." Unbelievers, then, are those who are lost, and their unbelief is the cause of their perdition. Their unbelief is not a misfortune to be lamented, or imputed to an evil destiny impelling them to their doom, but a sin, and the greatest of all sins, deserving to be visited, and which most assuredly shall be visited, with the most dreadful punishment. They cannot say respecting their unbelief, "the fault is not ours, but God's." The fault is theirs, entirely theirs; and while they are lost, God is not only justified, but glorified as the God of grace. To them, as to others, he revealed himself as the God of love. To them He addressed the promises of the Word. To them he proclaimed the Gospel call. To them his glory in Christ was exhibited in the same light, so that the same image of the same God was manifestly set forth, and provision made

for their beholding the glorious sight. He said to them in words which they could not misunderstand, (Prov. i. 23,) "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" (ver. 24.) "Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." He wished to have gathered them "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they would not," (Matt. xxiii. 37). He was willing, they were unwilling. He wished them, as all, "to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth," (1 Tim. ii. 4); and it is because they opposed his will, and would not come to the knowledge of the truth; it is because they resisted the truth, and the Spirit of truth, the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; it is "because he has called," (Prov. i. 24,) "and they refused, He has stretched out his hand, and they have not regarded," (ver. 25,) because "they have set at nought all his counsel," because "they would have none of his reproof," (ver. 29,) "for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord," that they are lost, and "their house is left unto them desolate." "They eat of the fruit of their own way, they are filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 31.) They shut their eyes in opposition to the glory of God, upon the light revealing eternal life, and therefore their deserved doom is the darkness of eternal death. Nay, perhaps, it will be found, on the day of the revelation of all things, that their unbelief is not only the cause, but is the chief element of their perdition; that their sin is its own punishment; and that

the carnal heart of enmity against God which shuts their eyes to the brightness of the divine glory shining from heaven in the only-begotten Son, when that only begotten Son, whom they have despised in the day of his grace, shall be revealed a second time in the day of his glory, shall be its own tormenter, its own hell; when the immortal spirit, aroused from the slumber of spiritual death, shall awaken, amid the upbraidings and self-condemnation of remorse, to the dread reflection, "I have trodden under foot the Son of God; I have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith I was sanctified an unholy thing; I have done despite to the Spirit of grace." (Heb. x. 29.) What else is the meaning of the cry, which they raise in vain to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi. 16.)

Who then is the author of that resistance which they make to God, revealed in the glory of his grace, when he shines in the face of the only-begotten Son?

Not God himself, as they blasphemously allege, when they make the doctrine, "we can do nothing of ourselves," "we must live in the hope that God will give us a new heart," an excuse for continuing an hour in unbelief and ungodliness. Who makes them unbelievers, and therefore ungodly? Who blinds their minds? Not God himself, says the text, but the enemy of God, "the god of this world." We wonder when we perceive that the light is shining from heaven all around, and life eternal set before sinners, and yet men on whom it shines, acknowledging that they are

sinners, are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. We wonder that the Gospel, of which such glorious things are spoken in the prophecies of the Old Testament, leading us to expect that the times of the Messiah would be times of peace, and love, and blessedness; "the wolf and the lamb dwelling together, the sword of the warrior turned into a plough-share, and the wilderness rejoicing and blossoming as the rose;" that this Gospel, of which it is said, (Ps. lxxxix. 15,) "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted," is treated as a thing of nought, and trifled with as it is: and we ask, is this the Gospel which the men of our day are, almost universally around us, professing? Is this a blessedness which the Christians of our day are enjoying, or are even expecting to enjoy? We read, that "the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12); that it is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 24); and yet we see, perhaps without wonder, because it is so common that it has ceased to be wonderful, this omnipotent Word, by those who acknowledge its truth, listened to with listlessness, and treated, if presented in its simplicity, as foolishness. We see that, unless it is adorned with the ornaments of human rhetoric, and rendered attractive by the wisdom of words, it is accounted

insipid, common-place, contemptible. And why is it so, if it reveals the glory of God? Why, but because the enemy of God is at work, and in opposing the illumination of sinners by the light of Christ is performing his proper and peculiar work? We wonder, because we forget that there is a devil in the world, and because we are ignorant of the devil's devices and the devil's power. We forget that there is a power and spirit of darkness, as well as a Spirit of power and light, and that every soul which is brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, must be translated from darkness to light, and turned from the power of Satan to God. We forget that there is an hour as well as a power of darkness; an hour of temptation (Rev. iii. 10), which should come upon all the earth, to try, as the Israelites were tried in the wilderness, them that dwell upon the earth, and profess to be travelling towards heaven. Those souls whom we behold in a Christian land, where the image of God is in Christ revealed, without the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which characterise the kingdom of heaven in contradistinction from the world, are so many trophies of the devil's power, and the multitude of these is the triumph of his power. All that power is directed to one end—opposition to the glory of God and the salvation of man; and since it is in the Gospel of Christ that the glory of God shines, and through the Gospel of the glory of Christ that men are made heirs of salvation, the single aim of the enemy of God and man is to darken the Gospel truth, or blind the minds of those to whom it is revealed, that they may not see in

it the glory of God, nor be transformed by the sight into the image of Christ. In this view, mark the emphasis of the text, which unmasks the devil's peculiar policy. All his efforts are directed against the light of the Gospel of Christ. There is no light but in Christ; no soul lost except that to which the light of Christ is hid. All the resources of the kingdom of darkness are therefore turned against the light of the Gospel of Christ. As the seed which the Son of Man sows, or sends his messengers to sow, is "the word of the kingdom," (Matt. xiii. 19,) the devil, whose object is to maintain the kingdom of darkness, goes, or sends forth his messengers, to steal away the Word, to persecute on account of the Word, to choke the Word, but, in whatever way they work, to render the Word of the kingdom unfruitful.

How then, we now inquire, in the *third* place, does the god of this world work in blinding the mind, or preventing those to whom the Gospel shines from beholding the glory of Christ, and believing in the truth?

To this the answer of the text is—

III. That it is in the character of "the god of this world," and therefore through the world as his instrument, that Satan blinds the minds of the lost; so that the opposition, wherever the Gospel is preached, is between the darkness of the world and the light of the Gospel; between Satan, the god of the world, the prince of darkness, and Christ, the Lord of the kingdom of heaven and earth, the prince of light.

Faith being " the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," (Heb. xi. 1,) and this faith the characteristic of those who are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, the devil's devices are mainly turned against this, and those who are partakers of this precious faith. To prevent this faith from being extended in the world, and oppose, tempt, traduce, and keep out of sight those into whose hearts the light of the Gospel has thus shone, that, if he cannot withdraw them altogether from their steadfastness, he may mar as much as possible their personal enjoyment, diminish their influence, disunite their exertions, and prevent their numbers from increasing, is the devil's ambition, and employment, and delight in the world. Those who have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, are the living members of the living Head of the Church, who having with him died unto the flesh and the world, have risen with him to newness of life, and set their affections on the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. " By the resurrection of Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven, they have been begotten again to a living hope." " Their life is hid with Christ in God." They do not consider worldly pleasure, or the indulgence of worldly lusts, to be their life, or their highest good. Christ is their life, and " when Christ who is their life shall be revealed," they, although hidden now and despised in the world, " shall be revealed with him in glory." That glory is their hope—that revelation or manifestation of Christ and

of the children of God in glory, by the realization of which they overcome the present world; and while "they love Christ whom they have not seen," while "in Christ though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," they know what it is to have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, receiving, as they do, the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. This is the only faith that overcomes the world, and therefore this is the only faith which the god of the world is opposing. A faith which does not overcome the world, a faith which is not the substance of things hoped for, which is not the realized knowledge of things not seen, so far from opposing, he makes one of his greatest instruments in opposing the kingdom of God, and blinding the minds of his votaries in the world. For where the Gospel is preached, the wicked one, who quoted Scripture in the temptation of our Saviour, shews himself to be the wicked one by making a perverted Gospel, which turns the grace of God into licentiousness; the means of preventing men from receiving the Gospel of the grace of God in truth. He persuades them, therefore, that the mere acknowledgment of certain truths respecting Christ as the only and the all-sufficient Saviour, and themselves as sinners, or hell-deserving sinners, is faith, while through the cross of Christ the world is not crucified to them, nor they to the world. Accordingly, you see men and women persuading themselves that they are Christians, believers, while they are avowedly loving the world and the things of the world, and seeking and finding their

happiness in the gratification of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Worldliness is the spirit which the devil is fostering in the world, and by which he is preventing men from beholding or receiving Christ. We deceive ourselves, my brethren, if we imagine that the devil is so weak, in a land where a certain portion of Gospel light shines, and where the consciences of even unrenewed men are partially enlightened, as to seek to drive all men into scandalous sin, that he tempts the Christians of Britain, or the Presbyterians of Scotland, as he does the heathens of India or the savages of Africa. If he can occupy their time, and their thoughts, and their hearts, with the world, he will be contented to allow them to make a profession of faith. He will persuade them that they are Christians. He will allow them to engage in the work, ay, even in the ministry of Christ. His sole object is to keep them from that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, by which alone they overcome the world; to prevent them from having the faith of him who said, (Gal. vi. 14,) "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world." Worldliness, therefore, as the spirit the opposite of Gospel faith, is the spirit which the god of the world is cherishing. He is putting the things that are seen into the place of the things that are not seen, and substituting the things of the present world for the things that are hoped for in the world to come.

But it is against those who have come out from the

world and are separate, that the devil aims his fieriest darts. He knows that the Church, which is fighting the good fight of faith, is the antagonist power to his kingdom in the world. To pervert the character of that Church is therefore his principal aim; and it is by producing conformity to the world that he principally seeks to accomplish his aim. It is by destroying the distinction between the Church and the world, and removing the Church from the position which she should ever occupy, as the witness for God against the world, that he is successful. A worldly Church is the devil's most effective agent for the destruction of immortal souls; a Church of which the members are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; a Church in which those who have the form of godliness are denying its power; a Church, the members of which, instead of being living epistles of him who was meek and lowly in heart, of him who said, "Love one another as I have loved you," instead of being distinguished by "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," are distinguished by all that is most characteristic of the world, pride, covetousness, supreme love of money, and that wrath of man that worketh not the righteousness of God but division and confusion, aversion to spiritual duties, such as prayer and communion with God, and dread of death, from want of heavenly hope.

We thus learn five great truths respecting those who are lost,—

1st, That they have not, as they suppose, the knowledge of God. The opinion is a delusion which is so prevalent, that men know the truth, but do not walk

according to the truth; that they see the light, but do not walk in the light; that they know the love of God but do not love God. The lost are "blinded."

2d, You see that unbelief is that which is preventing men from enjoying the peace, and possessing the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, inexcusable unbelief.

3d, That the devil is at work in producing unbelief, and that he is the enemy by whom the lost are overcome.

4th, That the world is the devil's great instrument in blinding the eyes of the lost, and ought to be viewed with suspicion, as the grand enemy of souls, by those who are on the side of God.

5th, That nothing can overcome the world but the faith and immediate hope of the kingdom of heaven, which the lost do not see, and do not believe to be "at hand."

SERMON IX.

THE HEADSHIP OF THE SON OF MAN.

BY THE

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JOHN v. 27.

"*And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.*"

We are informed at the beginning of the chapter, that there was at this time "a feast of the Jews,"—one of the three great annual festivals at which the adult males of the nation were expected to present themselves; and Jesus, that he might fulfil all righteousness, had come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast. But combining,

as his manner ever was, " mercy" with " sacrifice"—acts of beneficence with works of piety—he went about the city " doing good." Wherever the wretched were likely to be found, thither the compassionate Redeemer always directed his steps; and repairing accordingly to the pool of Bethesda, he found its five porches crowded as a lazar-house, with a great multitude of impotent folk—" of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." Selecting the most wretched and helpless of the crowd—a man who had had an infirmity for the long period of thirty-eight years, and who had long frequented Bethesda's pool, but daily coming friendless, was daily doomed to return unhealed, Jesus said to him, and said with immediate effect, " Rise, take up thy bed and walk." But the day of this miraculous cure happened to be the sabbath-day. The Jews therefore said to him that was healed—" This is the Sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy couch." The poor man, though a stranger as yet to Him who had been his great physician, answered them with all the native simplicity and force of truth,—" He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk." He at once felt the conclusiveness of the demonstration, that the person who had performed on him so notable and gracious a miracle could not possibly be an irreligious or a wicked man — that the supernatural skill which had healed his body could not but be a sure and safe guide for the direction of his soul—yea, that He who had shown himself invested with such power over nature and nature's works, must be Lord " even of the sabbath day."

The Jews, however, were not satisfied with this reasoning, but assailed Jesus himself on the subject, and it was in the course of his remarkable vindication of himself from their aspersions, that he gave utterance to the words of the text. Clearly asserting his equality with the Father, (for so the Jews understood him, and he acquiesced in the interpretation they put upon his words,) and maintaining his consequent ability and right to do the Father's works, he had said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I also work. What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." And then, passing on to a statement of his attributes and prerogatives as Mediator—being at once the Son of God and the Son of Man—he declares with emphatic solemnity: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of *the Son of God*, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. *And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.*"

It is always with reluctance that we advert to any thing like an error or defect in our excellent authorised version of the Scriptures; nor can we do so at present without rendering a humble testimony to its general fidelity and beauty, which have never yet been surpassed. As to the words of the text, however,—"he hath given him authority to *execute* judgment,"—it must be admitted that they convey an imperfect, not to say an incorrect notion of the comprehensive meaning of the original. To be nothing more than an *executioner*

of the decrees of divine justice, is not necessarily a distinction which confers honour. That is an authority which God has often committed to fallen angels; nay, he has sometimes employed in the execution of "his work, his strange work, judgment," the basest and most worthless of men. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger! the staff in whose hand is that of my wrath." "Deliver my soul from the wicked who are thy sword; from men who are thy hand, O Lord." But the authority which the Father hath given to the Son in reference to judgment, is something more than that; it includes far more than merely appointing him to be the official minister of his vengeance; and, indeed, the expression * here plainly bears, that unto Jesus as Messiah, God has given "*even the judicial authority*," that is, the right to exercise and pronounce judgment as well as to execute it,—in short, has entrusted and committed to him all authority throughout the universe, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. This view is confirmed by the similar declaration which Christ had made a little before, (v. 22,) "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment, (viz. all right and power to judge,) unto the Son." And at the thirtieth verse he adds,—"As I hear I judge, and my judgment is just."

The text, then, as thus explained, will lead our devout contemplations—*First*, to the *Judicial Authority* which Christ exercises; and, *Secondly*, to the *Reason* for this arrangement in the Divine economy,—"*because he is the Son of Man.*" I invite you to consider,—

* Κρίσιν ποιεῖν; literally, "to *do* judgment," viz., to judge.

I. The *Judicial Authority* which the Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is here said to exercise by the appointment of God, the Father.

Now by Christ, as Mediator, receiving from the Father judicial authority, we simply understand his being placed at the head of the government of all things, according to his own declaration made to his Apostles immediately before his ascension to glory; "all power is given unto me,"—all authority is committed to me "in heaven and on earth." Is judgment exercised in correctly framing laws for the regulation of society? The Son of Man is the all-wise lawgiver. Is judgment exercised in the steady, vigorous, and effective administration of the laws? The Son of Man is the great interpreter, the supreme administrator of the statutes of his own kingdom. Are laws infringed, and must their sanctions and penalties be enforced? And is judgment exercised in enforcing them in an equitable and impartial manner? The Son of Man, (to use a term borrowed from human affairs,) is the chief magistrate of the universe; and as he now forms in his wisdom, so he will at last pronounce in his majesty, and execute by his might, the respective judgments on the acquitted and the condemned.

That we may, therefore, take a comprehensive view of the royal prerogatives of our exalted King, let us consider his judicial authority, both as *present* and *future*.

And in adverting to the former point, (upon which we mean chiefly to dwell,) viz., Christ's kingly power as presently exercised; observe 1*st*, *That the Father hath given to the Son all judicial authority over the affairs of this*

world. The Redeemer is thus before our view, as the Lord of providence — that providence, according to which, he in a most holy, wise, and powerful manner preserves all creatures, and governs all their actions. While as the MAKER, the HEIR, the POSSESSOR of all things, he upholdeth all things by the word of his power —as the WONDERFUL, the COUNSELLOR, the PRINCE OF PEACE—the government of all things is laid upon his shoulder. The lot of every man, be he king or beggar, is cast by Christ. With him is the number of our months, and he appoints to each one of us the place and the bounds of our habitation. Our times are wholly in his hand — our bodies, our souls, our relatives, our circumstances, our supplies are ever in his keeping—our *all* lies entirely at his disposal. By him is our course in life shaped out; the aspect of every day, the complexion of every hour is of his appointing —and all the events that can possibly befal us or ours, whether they be prosperous or adverse, are sent by Christ's providence, and are under Christ's control.

Now, the same wisdom which thus authoritatively judges, and absolutely ordains what is best for every individual, extends in the same manner to the varied and complicated affairs of families, communities, countries, the world. "The kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations." "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations, for unto thee doth the judgment appertain?" Statesmen may weave the curious web of their crooked policy. Men-slayers, under the false name of heroes, may lay down their plans of conquest. Despots

may take counsel together, and the people in tumult may rage and imagine vain things. But there is One who sitteth high in the heavens above all, and He, serenely looking down upon the apparent confusion — ruling in the whirlwind, and directing the storm—is leading all insensibly and unconsciously to fulfil his purposes, and do his good pleasure. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord, *that* standeth for ever—the thoughts of his heart unto all generations." How refreshing and sustaining to a Christian mind, to turn its views from the petty, creeping concerns—the grovelling, clashing interests—the fierce party contests of mere worldly politicians—and to regard all the great occurrences that have of late years taken place in our own country, or in foreign lands—and all the judgments that may at any time be abroad among the nations, and all the mighty changes that shall yet ensue throughout the globe, as simply the results of the administration of that Son of Man, whom the princes of this world crucified, though he was the Lord of glory. And bearing, as we do, the name of Christians, and appearing, as we do, in his courts, to pay him weekly homage, may we not fitly take into our mouths the language of the Psalmist—"Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth feared and was still. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Vow and pay

unto the Lord your God; let all that be round about him, bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth."

2. *The Father hath given to the Son all judicial authority in the Church on earth*, as well as in the world. Indeed he has been appointed to rule the world, in order that he may the more fully and prosperously rule the Church, by overruling every thing in the world for the Church's final triumph—for the Church's ultimate good. Hence it is said, that God "gave him to be the Head over all things *to the Church*;" and if he thus employ his wisdom and power in governing the world for the welfare of the Church, considered as in the world and as part of the world, it will follow (since the greater necessarily includes the less) that he exercises the judicial authority in a still more peculiar manner, as the Head of the Church, which is his body, his fulness, his chosen and beloved domain. The world he governs as a monarch his subjects. The Church he governs as a Father doth his family; and the thought of its being Christ the Saviour, who, as the head of the world and of the Church, orders every thing in his lot, is to the Christian the most consolatory and cheering that can well be conceived. Are you, my believing friend, smarting under some severe, and perhaps unlooked for calamity? Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is come to try you, as if it were some really *strange* thing that has happened to you. It is sent, not by a stranger, but by a friend, yea, by your best friend—by one who loves you better, because more wisely,

than you love yourself—by one who laid down his life for you, and who, therefore, in whatever else he may do regarding you, can surely never mean to do you any hurt, but will surely do you good. Let faith only look, and whose form and figure do you perceive in the midst of the burning fiery furnace? It is one like unto the Son of Man. Whose voice do you hear out of the dark cloud? It is his who said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost—is come, not to destroy men's lives but to preserve them." And if to such an one as this Son of Man the Father hath given authority to exercise judgment also, "because he is the Son of Man,"—can his judgment—the judgment of the meek, the merciful, the suffering, the dying Son of Man—ever be but in accordance with the dictates of infinite goodness and infinite grace?

But Christ's government of his Christian people has especially respect to the condition of the Church militant universal — to the affairs of every visible branch of it, and of every particular congregation of which it is composed. *He is the judge*, and from his decision there lies no appeal. The key of the house of David—the symbol of royal government—is laid upon his shoulder, so that he openeth the gate of heaven to his friends and none shall shut them out—and he shutteth the gate of hell upon his foes and none shall open it. This Son of Man has still power on earth to forgive sin, or to pronounce that sin remaineth. Under whatever form of polity his Church may be governed here below among his professing people—whether the rule and discipline thereof be committed

to one man, as among Episcopalians, or to a select body of men as among Presbyterians, or to the collective body of Church members, as among Congregationalists—Christ must ever be acknowledged as *the* alone Supreme and infallible Head, to whom the governors and the governed are alike accountable, and by whom they are and shall be judged.

The habitual realization of this momentous truth ought to regulate aright the conduct both of Christian pastors and the Christian people. Ministers and other office-bearers in the Church, remembering their own liability to err in judgment, and feeling their deep responsibility to Him from whom they derive their commission, ought to avoid all uncharitable harshness and undue severity in the judgments which they may be called to pronounce respecting any of the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. And if this be the bounden duty of those who bear rule in the Church, how peculiarly unbecoming must a censorious spirit be in persons who are there invested with no judicial authority whatever. For them to sit in judgment upon their fellow-Christians in matters either of discipline or government, of faith or of practice, exhibits an utter ignorance of the laws of Christ's house, and a spirit and temper altogether at variance with the disposition which Christ's word inculcates when it says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." It is a travelling out of their own sphere—it is acting "as busy bodies in other men's matters"—nay, it is an impious invasion of that sovereign right of judgment which is the exclusive prerogative of the Lord Christ. And to every such intruder

"into things which he hath not seen," the person who is the object of his gratuitous censure—asserting his independence as a man, and his liberty as "the Lord's free man," may boldly turn and ask, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts;" and then shall every man have praise or condemnation from the Son of Man.

Now this consideration, namely, that Christ is supreme judge in the Church, while it is doubtless a very serious and solemn thought, is nevertheless fitted to impart strong consolation to a Christian when he is exposed to the shafts of malignant and unmerited reproach. Withdrawing himself from the cruel strife of slanderous tongues, he can "enter into his chamber, and shut his doors about him," and there make his humble but confident appeal to his gracious Master. Let fellow-worms in their ignorant presumption censure and condemn, but there is one whose judgment is according to truth, and on his sympathizing tenderness he may ever rely, so long as conscience, enlightened by the word of God, assures him he is in the path of truth and of duty. It is the Son of Man, his faithful high priest, his compassionate Redeemer, his indulgent and merciful judge. He knoweth his frame, and he knoweth his way; he can bear with his infirmities—he can

make allowance for his shortcomings—he can appreciate his motives—he can discern all his perplexities—he can weigh all his difficulties—he can enter into all his feelings; and with support like this, a man may cast the rash judgments of open enemies or pretended friends to the winds. Committing himself unto Him who judgeth righteously, He shall bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon day.

3. The Father hath given to the Son judicial authority *in heaven*, as well as on earth. He is the supreme legislator and administrator of law there also, according to his own declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." This includes that peculiar dominion which it is given to Christ to exercise over angels. Respecting those high and happy intelligences, the Bible affords us little more information than what is necessary to shew the connexion they have with man and man's redemption. This much, however, seems to be revealed regarding their destiny, namely—that they were created mutable and fallible—that many of their number have actually fallen never more to rise—and that for aught we know, this might, in the course of ages, have happened to more of the angelic family, had it not been for the interposition of Christ in behalf of the fallen race of man. And then opens up to our view that vast and sublime scheme of divine wisdom, by which not only are sinful believing men reconciled to God, but holy angels are reconciled to holy men, and the permanent stability of both in holiness and happiness is for ever secured in Christ, their common and ever-living Head. For this end, the

"elect angels" are brought into the Church—are made to constitute part of the body, "the fulness" of Christ, and He rules over them in love; he enhances their felicity, by connecting them with his redeemed, and renders it now certain and everlasting, by making it no longer dependent upon themselves, but upon his own absolute purpose and almighty power. Thus he becomes the medium of re-union and of communion, not only between the angels and saints in heaven, but between angels and saints on earth. As there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over every repenting sinner, and they are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, so through Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, the citizens of Zion are already come, not only to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, but to "an innumerable company of angels." He is the mystic ladder seen by Jacob, reaching down from heaven to earth and up from earth to heaven, and according to his own prediction, we now see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Thus it is that unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places is made known—not by creation and its wonders, not by providence and its mysteries, but *by the Church*—that is, by redemption and its glories—the manifold wisdom of God. Thus in the dispensation of the fulness of time, God gathers together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. Thus, as it was by him and for him that all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible

and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; so it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, and (having made peace through the blood of his cross,)—by him to reconcile all things unto himself—by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. And therefore hath he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, his *fulness*—that which he fills, and enriches, and beautifies—even the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Let us fix our adoring regards upon this King of saints and angels, this King of glory. Does purity, harmony, love, prevail through all that happy region? Does joy unspeakable bound in every heart? Does bliss unutterable swell every bosom with rapture? Is their peace as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea? All these things are but the results of His administration, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice even for ever. No sinner can hope to enter heaven but through Christ's permission, and by Christ's appointment. How important, then, how necessary to our happiness, that we should now endeavour to secure Christ as our friend, if we would at last join the glorified multitude of many angels and saints who sing: "Worthy is the Lamb that

was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

4. The Father hath committed to the Son judicial authority in *hell*—the world of penal misery. No scheme of law can long exist, no system of government can be carried on, without appropriate punishments for rebellion and crime. And since it is a lamentable truth, that in the moral world of God's creation, many of the rational and accountable beings, who, according to the constitution of their high nature were left to the freedom of their own will, nevertheless persist in choosing the paths of disobedience and impenitence even to the end—there remains for them, as criminals, nothing but the certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour God's adversaries. Yea, that judgment has already commenced—that flame of indignation has already burst forth—and a place of torment "of fiery burning sulphur unconsumed," has, according to the righteous ordination of a righteous God, been appointed for apostate angels and ungodly men. "Tophet is ordained of old. Yea, for sinners is it prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah as a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." If there be truth in the Bible, it is at this moment blazing in inconceivable fury, with the flame that is unquenchable.

Ye scoffers at the promises and threatenings of the Bible! say not in your hearts, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Know that whatever may be the aspect of the fu-

ture in this world, there can be to you, while scoffers ye remain, no hope in the future of another world—that unseen future to which you are swiftly and most surely tending. Do not flatter yourselves that when you die, you will necessarily be happy, though you know not well why, nor how, or where. Do not buoy yourselves up even with the hope of annihilation. What a *hope!* But believe it—your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not. The penitent thief went the very day of his death with Christ to Paradise ;—but whither went his blaspheming companion? Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom ; the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell being in torment. Now, we say, that the judicial government of that world belongs of right to Christ also. His wisdom portions out the measure of every sufferer's punishment according to the measure of his guilt; his power controls them in their efforts to escape, and chains them fast down to their misery ; his justice furnishes ever new food to the worm that never dies, and ever fresh fuel to the fire that is never quenched. Yes, and even they, though in the accents of anguish and despair, do praise him as the judge. Every agonising pang of torture they endure—every burning tear of remorse they shed—every howling wail of desolation they utter—declares the glory of his equity and holiness, and proclaims the Father's good pleasure that he should exercise and execute the judgment, because he is the Son of Man. And thus it is that the word is made good, that every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and *under the earth*, is heard crying, "Honour, and glory, and power be unto the

Lamb for ever, because true and righteous are his judgments."

So much, then, for the *present* judicial authority of the Lord Jesus Christ—an authority which he exercises over the world, over the Church in the world, over heaven above, and over hell beneath. "He that descended into the lower parts of the earth is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things."

We can only glance at the other branch of this head of discourse, viz., the *future* final judgment which Christ will execute. Indeed, it must be obvious from what has been already said, that august and solemn as will be the transactions of *that* day—the last, the closing day of time, "the day for which all other days were made," they will constitute nothing more than what the Scripture calls "the *revelation* of God's righteous judgments,"—they will only be the exhibition and manifestation to all worlds of the judgments which Christ shall have previously formed, and they derive all their importance from the fact of Christ being already the judge. You think of the Last Judgment as of something very remote and indefinite, and with which you have little present concern; but, ah! consider that the Father hath already committed the judgment to the Son; his work of judgment is already begun, and is at this moment going on. He is intimately acquainted with all your actions—all your words—all your thoughts, your aims, motives, feelings, desires, plans and purposes; and upon every thing about you, whether in the heart, the

lips, or the life, Christ exercises his judgment and forms his opinion the instant it appears, and he only awaits "the day" to declare it.

And he that shall come, will come in his own time, and will not tarry. Of the momentous events of that day no description could be half so impressive as the simple but sublime language of his own Word, "Then the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the *sign of the Son of Man* in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man, (as foretold by Daniel,) coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Then shall he also say to them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father—when he shall have put down all hostile rule, and all opposing authority and power; and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then, but not till then, shall his mediatorial character

merge in his Divine nature, that "God may be all in all."

Our illustration of the *Second* head of discourse, must of necessity be very brief. It is the *Reason* for this arrangement in the divine economy, *viz.*, "because he is the Son of Man." Much has been written as to the cause why Christ is sometimes designated the Son of God, and at other times the Son of Man. It will, we think, be found, that both expressions are commonly used indiscrimately and interchangeably as titles of the Messiah. But whenever we find, by their close juxtaposition and peculiar connection in the same passage that they are obviously employed in the way of emphatic contrast, we are then warranted in attaching to each a different meaning. This is obviously the case in the account given of Peter's noble confession to his master. "Whom do men say, that I the *Son of Man* am?" "We believe that thou art the Christ, *the Son of the living God.*" Now, there seems to be the same intentional emphasis in the words of the text; for at ver. 25, it is said, "the dead shall hear the voice of the *Son of God;*" but here it is said, that he is invested with judicial authority, not as the Son of God, but "because he is *the Son of Man.*" We cannot but recognize in these contrasted phrases, a reference to the two distinct natures in the one person of our Saviour Judge. As the Son of God, he is divine; and being the giver of all life, it is he who quickens the dead. As the Son of man, he is human, and in that character and capacity it is that he exercises judgment — in other words, it accords with the

designs of infinite wisdom and mercy, that the judge as well as the Saviour, should himself be man. Why? In the *first* place, *for his own sake*—that his human character might be vindicated, his human nature glorified, his obedience and sufferings rewarded, his mediatorial work completed and crowned. This reason is hinted at in the context, (ver. 22, 23,) "the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father that hath sent him." The expression, "son of man," frequently denotes in Scripture a person of humble origin, of poor and mean circumstances. "Lord," asks the Psalmist, "what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?" "The son of man, says Job, is a worm," "and I," responds the suffering Messiah, "am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Yet is it "a Son of Man" that is constituted judge of the quick and dead. "For unto the angels, hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, "what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him but little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Does any one object, with the unbelieving Jews, "how, sayest thou, that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? and where is he to be seen?" We reply with Paul. "We see Jesus who was made a little

lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour, on account of the suffering of death." Yes, it is that Son of Man who was the reputed child of a humble mechanic—born in a stable, and laid in a manger; it is that Son of Man, who said of himself, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head;" "the Son of man is come not to be served, but to be a servant, and to give his life a ransom for many." It is that Son of Man who, after going about doing good, went to death as had been written of him—was betrayed to the chief priests and elders—was delivered to the Gentiles, to mock, and scourge, and crucify. It is that Son of Man who was lifted up in ignominy on the cross, and was then buried deep in the grave, and who lay three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Yet that was the very hour when the Son of Man was to be glorified, and God was to be glorified in him. His first martyr Stephen saw in dying the heavens opened, and this same Son of Man, whom he recognized as his crucified Lord, standing on the right hand of God. And his exiled Apostle, John, saw in mystic vision, in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man, arrayed in robes of kingly majesty, girded with Almighty power, having the sharp two-edged sword of justice going out of his mouth, and proclaiming "I am the first and the last, I am he who liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death." And even he, the beloved disciple, who in the days of Christ's flesh had leant on his bosom

in all the fondness of familiar friendship, now falls at his feet as one dead. "Because though in the form of God, and equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, the once despised, rejected, crucified Son of Man, every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." He passed through a world that knew him not, obscure and contemned, and it is therefore right and fitting, were it only for the vindication of his own real character and high mission, that to that world he should yet be known as its judge. Yes! and Pilate shall then stand at the bar of his prisoner; and Herod shall stand before the throne of that King whom he and his band so contumeliously set at nought; and Nero and Julian shall tremble in the dread presence of him whom they persecuted in his people. And oh! what a contrast will in that day be presented, to the scene which was witnessed in the hall of judgment at Jerusalem,—when the poor, degraded, buffeted, seemingly crushed Nazarene — he who was accounted unfit to live, shall be manifested to an assembled universe as the Lord of life and of worlds — glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

2. Another reason for the Son of Man, the Saviour, being appointed the judge of all, has reference to *Satan and the powers of darkness.* Obscure as is the account we possess of the fall of our first parents, this much is evident, that the great apostate spirit imagined, in his presumptuous folly and wickedness, that the most effectual way in which he could tarnish the glory of the Almighty, from whom he and his fellows had revolted, would be to detach from his allegiance to heaven, the new-made creature man. In this scheme he was permitted, in so far, to succeed; but it was only in order that his own confusion and disgrace might in the end be the more signal, and his final misery the more complete. Mark, with holy wonder, the surpassing wisdom of the all-wise God!—adore, though you cannot fathom, the depth of his unsearchable judgments! Satan was allowed to triumph over man, but the triumphing of the wicked is short; and it is deserving of your special remark, that before a single word of condemnation had been uttered by God, either on the deceived woman or the yielding man, the curse was pronounced on the serpent, and the blessing was pronounced on the man, even through the woman's seed, which should bruise the serpent's head. And, in due time, that promised Son of Man was manifested in our world to destroy the works of the devil. Often did Satan attempt his overthrow, but as often was he driven from the field discomfited. At length the old serpent eagerly embraced the opportunity of wounding the Redeemer's heel, but he found, to his cost, that his own head was crushed in the attempt. *Now,* empha-

tically, was the judgment of this world—now was the prince of this world cast out—yea, Christ fought him on his own ground, and with his own weapons. By the cross he spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in it; by the act of dying he gave the last enemy the last mortal blow—pursued him into his own dark dominions, and through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and now, as we have seen, the victorious and exalted Son of Man reigns over the devil and his angels. Jesus the Saviour tramples under foot Abaddon the Destroyer; and he and his emissaries shall be judged, condemned, punished everlastingly by the Son of Man—yea, shall be judged by ransomed sinners of the human race; for know ye not, saith an apostle, that we shall judge angels? And herein then you may perceive at once the highest glory of the Man, Christ Jesus, and the deepest degradation of man's deadliest foe—that this very human nature—this flesh and blood of ours—now so weak, and frail, and dying — reckoned by Satan so inviting a prey and so easy a conquest—shall yet, in the glorified humanity of the Son of God, be exalted far above all created things —shall shine forth in glorious beauty—shall be adored and served by angel and archangel, by cherubim and seraphim, thus testifying throughout the wide universe, and during a long eternity, the truth of the declaration in the text, "that to him the Father hath given authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man."

3. There is another concluding reason to be men-

tioned, why the judge is a man, and it is one which regards the interests of *the human race.* In this and other free states, it is the privilege of every citizen to be " tried by his peers," that is, by his fellow-citizens; and in some countries, if it be a foreigner who is the accused party, he can insist on having the half of the jury who are to try him composed of foreigners like himself. The propriety of such arrangements as these in the dispensation of justice is sufficiently obvious. They are intended to give the accused the advantage of knowing, that those who are to decide on the question of his guilt or innocence are men like himself, subjects of the same government, bound by the same laws—no less interested than himself in their righteous and impartial administration, and who therefore may be confidently expected to weigh the evidence in equal scales, and return an unbiassed and faithful verdict. Now though it be true that this illustration is not applicable in every point to the case before us, yet it cannot be without some good reason that God has said, that he will judge the world, not by that angel, but by that *Man* whom he hath ordained. Jesus having himself assumed the human nature, though without sin, knows by his own practice in what obedience to God's law consists; he knows, by his own experience, the sore trials to which man is exposed, and the sinless infirmities and frailties with which man is encompassed. He can and will take into account any palliating or alleviating circumstances that can fairly be pleaded in extenuation or excuse. In short, he has the form and feelings of a man and a brother, sin only excepted.

Greater love can no man have for another than he had, for men, when he laid down his life for them; and they may therefore rest assured, that in so far as his duty to God and his regard for God's law can permit him, he will not be against men, but on their side. To the humble believer who trusts in nothing but the perfect righteousness of the Saviour-Judge, the thought of standing before him ought not to be appalling. Abiding in him now by faith, when He shall appear, he will have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. He will recognise in his countenance the features of a well-known and long-tried friend; and were it possible for an accusation to arise from any quarter, he will say with humble boldness, "Who is he that condemneth me?—not the judge, for he is Christ, who died for my offences and rose again for my justification, and hath ever been making intercession for me; and now, according to his promise, he is come again to receive me unto himself, that where he is there I may be also." For the Lord Jesus, when sitting as judge of all, and dispensing rewards and punishments at the grand assize of his kingdom, will only be completing his great mediatorial work. And surely it is fitting that such an end should crown such a work, and that he who is the Author of salvation, should likewise be its Finisher.

But while all this is calculated to impart good hope through grace to every humble believer, who is looking and longing for his glorious appearing, what dismay and despair will it not throw into the hearts of the finally impenitent! The sentence upon them will be

pronounced by a man like themselves—able to appreciate all the circumstances under which their guilt was contracted, and both able and willing to take into favourable consideration every thing that can legitimately be urged in arrest of judgment. Hence they will have no room even to pretend, that there can be the least partiality on the side of the judge; nay, it will strike the acutest pang through their trembling spirits, as they stand before the tribunal, to think that he who now addresses them as their judge might have been their Redeemer—that he who must execute upon them "his work, his strange work, judgment," is the very Son of Man who died to save the guilty, and that had they but listened in time to the accents of his grace they would not now have had to hear the thunders of his vengeance—that had they but earnestly sought his face and favour, they would not now have had to encounter the lightning of his eye or the terror of his frown. They would have passed to his right hand instead of his left—they would have been now rising with him to his high glory, instead of being banished with everlasting destruction from his presence. Oh! how they will curse in that day their folly and stupidity in having bartered for the pleasures of a day the joys of a whole eternity. Just say, in what state that man's mind must be, who can seek relief from overwhelming misery and despair, only by averting his countenance from Him who is the light and life of men, crying—"Mountains! fall on us; Rocks! cover us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," —even that Lamb of God who was once given to take

away sin, and whose blood would have cleansed from all sin, but which now rests, not as atoning, but avenging blood upon their guilty heads. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man." Amen.

SERMON X.

THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.

BY

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ACTS xvi. 14, 15.

"*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*"

St. Paul was, in many respects, an extraordinary man. In studying those peculiarites of character which fitted him for his apostolic mission, it is impossible to overlook the happy versatility of his heaven-directed genius; the holy tact with which he adapted himself to the various classes of character whom he had occasion to address, becoming "all things to all men, that he

might gain some." A man of learning—while, on the one hand, he could meet on their own ground the most eminent doctors of his own nation, he could, on the other, give point to his appeals to the sages of the heathen, by quotations from their own favourite poets. An orator of the first class—he knew how to make Felix tremble, and to constrain Agrippa to confess that he "almost persuaded" him "to be a Christian." At the same time, he could so vary his tone and style of address, as to minister to the edification and comfort of the humble seller of purple at Philippi.

It is to this lowly, but interesting individual, that our attention is called by this portion of the evangelic narrative. The narrative, though simple and brief, is full of meaning. It waits not to tell us what may have been the effect of the apostle's preaching on Lydia's fellow-worshippers;—but we learn from it that to *her* it was "the savour of life,"—"the power of God unto salvation." She, in fact, became on this occasion the subject of a great spiritual change—of *that* change which, in forms so various, and under images so deeply impressive, is ever kept prominently before us in the Word of God; and which demands such prominence, because forming, as regards character and personal experience, the *turning point* of salvation — the commencement of that life of grace upon earth, which issues in a life of glory in heaven. There are several important points of instruction in connexion with this change suggested by the narrative under our consideration. It suggests to us, I. its seat; II. its author; III. its instrument; IV. its antecedents; and V. its effects. To these several

points we would, with the Divine assistance and blessing, now solicit your attention.

In the *first* place, we are here directed to the *seat* of that great spiritual change required by the Gospel. And this seat, we read, is *the heart:* "whose heart the Lord opened." Christianity, where it governs truly, governs the whole man. It is the life's blood of the soul, which works its way throughout every part of the moral system. Still the heart is its more immediate seat. The heart of the unrenewed sinner is the grand seat of that corruption to which he is by nature heir—the palace in which Satan, the ruler of this world, plants his throne; and whence he issues those sinful mandates, to which his deluded subjects yield such ready and cordial obedience. On the other hand, the heart of the renewed Christian is the true seat of that grace by which the corruption of man's nature in his fallen state is cured, and Satan expelled from his stronghold within. As it is "out of the evil treasure of an evil heart," that those "evil thoughts" are brought forth, which are the parents in succession of evil thoughts, evil habits, and evil lives; so it is "out of the good treasure of a good heart," that we must draw those stores of good principles, which are the prompters to all that is spiritually good in temper, character, and conduct. The heart is the fountain of active influence; and till the fountain is purified the streams which flow from it are necessarily defiled. By nature this fountain is in all of us polluted;—not only polluted, but locked and sealed against the grace that can purify it. Yet there are many who overlook this;—and who so

little understand the very first principles of the doctrine of Christ, that they talk of the goodness of their hearts, and complacently indulge in vain self-flattery, when this fountain of pollution has never once been reached by purifying influence. Let them talk, however, as they may, their language is that of ignorance and folly, *till* such influence break through all its locks and seals, and effect that change that turns it from evil to good.

This change once effected, it constitutes *the* change. The heart once gained, it carries the whole man along with it. The grace which rules itself, it sends forth to give law to all the powers of the body and all the faculties of the mind,—so that the understanding apprehends, the memory treasures up its stores, and the affections ply their busy ministry, not as "servants of sin" but as "instruments of righteousness unto God." The ear is open to discipline—the mouth utters praise—the feet run in the way of God's commandments. And to these obedience becomes easy and agreeable, because the will seconds every command, and the heart supplies the cement which binds duty and inclination together. The opening of the heart therefore unto God, is virtually the surrender of the entire man to his service. And, accordingly, the day which is marked by an event so auspicious, is the first important day of the Christian's earthly history. It is a grand era of his being—that of his beginning emancipation from the thraldom of sin and corruption, and his admission to "the glorious liberty" of God's redeemed family. Trusting that such are your convictions, and that you look to the heart as the seat of the great spiritual change required

by the Gospel, let us now consider the narrative before us, as it suggests to us—

In the *second* place, the author of this change. Its author, we here learn, is divine. It was the *Lord* that opened the heart of Lydia, and He who opened hers, can alone open ours—which in their natural condition, while open to Satan the great enemy of souls, and those sinful lusts and desires which he stirs up within, are yet barred against God and all that would secure him any real love or obedience—against the voice of conscience —the ministry of the Word—the sanctifying influence of means, and the lessons, whether of merciful or afflictive providences. Ignorance, unbelief, pride, presumption, sensual desires, earthly passions and pursuits — these and kindred influences springing out of the corruption of our fallen natures, operating, some or all of them, upon the heart of every unrenewed sinner, like the bars of a castle, keep it closed — proof against all the transforming power of saving truth. And this they do in all without exception. The heart is thus shut, not merely in the grossly impure and the stupidly ignorant, but in the amiable, the moral, the intelligent, the outwardly pious—in persons who, like Lydia, wait upon God in the services of religion, and "exercise" themselves "to have a conscience void of offence towards God and toward man."

Who, then, is in such circumstances, to open the heart? Who is to turn the stream of its affections and desires towards God and divine things? Can the sinner do this for himself? As well may we ask, can the blind restore themselves to sight, or the deaf to hearing?

As well may we ask, can the dead quicken themselves to life? For such are the images by which the Word of God every where describes to us man's moral inability as a fallen sinner. Metaphors, it is true, may be interpreted too rigorously; and these, with others of a kindred character, which the Scriptures employ to describe man's condition by nature, if urged beyond a certain point, are unwarrantably strained, and contradict the clear testimony of Scripture to man's responsibility as a rational and moral being. Still, though metaphors, they are intended to have a meaning; and the lowest meaning which, upon any sound principle of interpretation, we can attach to them is, that it is not in fallen man of himself to open his heart to God. Such is, accordingly, the positive conclusion of the apostle. "The carnal" (that is, the unrenewed) "heart," says he, "is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Enmity to God is its very nature; and thus it is devoid of every principle which might dispose it to remove the bars which keep God's enemies within, and God himself without. Influence from without, therefore, must necessarily act upon it, before these very bars can be removed, and access to the heart obtained for Him who can change and renew it.

Whence, then, is this influence to come? Can any other individual do for the sinner what he either *will* not or *cannot* do for himself? Doubtless others may do much instrumentally. They may make use of means. These they may ply early and late, addressing the judgment, assailing the conscience, urging the terrors

of the law and the promises of the Gospel, and giving a voice to the events of Providence as they impart lessons of "correction and instruction in righteousness." But all such appliances, though useful and necessary, go after all but a certain way. They may reform but cannot renew. They may stir up the polluted fountain within but they cannot cleanse it. Man may knock at the door of the unrenewed heart; and when he knocks with energy and earnestness, he is seldom left without a response in certain movements in the understanding, the conscience, the affections, and the life. But there is none of these that amounts to the opening of the heart to God—none of these that can place Him upon its throne as its cherished Lord; or secure Him a cordial welcome as its abiding tenant. He to whom this work belongs is the Lord himself—the Lord who opened the heart of Lydia—the Lord who has an arm to break every bar; a key to unlock every ward; and who, when he works, gives sanctifying effect to every ray of light in the understanding—to every arrow of conviction in the conscience—to every warm sally of the affections and heart, till all obstacles give way, and the dominion of sin and Satan is no more. Wherever, therefore, we see the heart savingly changed, there we behold not a human but divine work; we behold Him at work upon the heart who at first formed it; and we have cause, with grateful admiration, to exclaim,—"What hath God wrought!" He himself, accordingly, claims it. "A new heart will *I* give unto you; a new spirit will *I* put within you; and *I* will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you hearts of flesh."

Let this conviction, therefore, regulate our gratitude, by prompting us to give Him the praise, wherever this gracious change is experienced; and let it guide our devotions, by placing us upon our knees with the prayer of David in the mouth of each of us,—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Having considered the *seat* and the *author* of the gracious change spoken of in this narrative, let us now—

In the *third* place, consider the instrument employed in effecting it. The instrument was here the Word of God preached by St. Paul.

The Lord, in opening the heart to the sanctities and consolations of the Gospel, is not tied down to any particular instrument. Sometimes he performs his work in a sovereign way, without the intervention of any instrument—any, at least, that we are able to trace. This, it is obvious, is the way in which he must work in those whom he calls to himself in infancy; for *they* are incapable of being addressed through the medium of their rational and moral powers. The general rule of God's procedure, however, is different from this. He usually makes use of means; and the mean which he has honoured more than any other in the work both of conviction and conversion, is that which he rendered effectual in the case of Lydia—the *word* preached by his faithful servants. If we look to the multitudes in the days of the Apostles whose hearts were turned from the folly of "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," we find that all of them were won in this way to the side of truth and holiness. The messengers of the

Most High went forth, proclaiming to the sons of men their guilt and danger as sinners on the one hand, and pressing upon them the free and frank offers of salvation through Christ, on the other. And as men received their message; — as the Gospel came to them "not in word only but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost," it was mighty in pulling down strongholds, and in levelling every barrier which opposed its entrance, in its light and love, into the heart. Nor has any other instrument yet appeared which can pretend to supersede it. In assailing the hearts of impenitent sinners, the Word is still "the hammer" that breaks, "the sword" that pierces, and "the fire" that melts; and (these preparatory steps over,) the heavenly "light" that guides to holiness, to purity, to comfort; the productive "seed" which, sown in the heart, and watered there by the dews of the Divine Spirit, springs up in the diversified "fruits of righteousness." The mode, indeed, in which it makes way to the heart, as well as its subsequent operations, often differ very widely in different individuals. To some it finds access through preaching; and then "faith cometh by hearing." To others it addresses itself through the eye; and then faith cometh by reading and meditation. Its effect upon one is immediate, direct, and palpable. He can tell the very discourse that first awakened him; the very text that first fixed the arrows of conviction in his heart. On others again, (and such is perhaps the general experience,) it tells gradually, insinuating itself into their hearts silently and secretly, through the lessons of their early days, the examples and instruc-

tions of pious parents, intercourse with religious men and religious books, and affecting dispensations of divine providence. Through all this diversity of channels, and with all these varieties in its operations, does the Word exert its renovating influence on the hearts of different individuals. Still, in all of them, it is the Word that produces the effect—the Word which is the rod of God's strength in working his moral miracles in the soul—" the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Let us then honour the Word accordingly; for next to Him whom it reveals, it is the best of heaven's gifts to the children of men. And in whatever way it makes its approach to us—whether we hear it with the ear, or read it with the eye, or listen to it as it speaks through the silent and unobtrusive eloquence of lives guided by its light and sanctified by its motives and hopes—in all let us prize and improve it; praying that the Spirit of grace may deposit it in our souls as " the seed" of life, and give it an abiding place there, as " the word of grace which is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among them which are sanctified." This narrative throws light—

In the *fourth* place, upon *the antecedents* to the gracious change required by the Gospel. These, in the case under our consideration, were very decidedly marked. In a land of idolators, Lydia, before the Lord opened her heart, was a worshipper of the true God, and an attentive observer of divine ordinances. Not that a similar training in divine things is indispensable in all cases. To affirm this, would be unwarrantably to

"limit the Holy One of Israel," and to contradict the experience of many of God's children. God is sometimes "found of them that sought him not." Witness Zaccheus, the penitent malefactor, Saul of Tarsus, and the Phillipian jailor in this very chapter. In none of these cases, as they are recorded to us by the sacred writers, can we trace any thing that would indicate a predisposition to, or a preparation for, the opening of the heart to God. We see the very reverse—in one a mere idle curiosity; in a second, immoral habits; in a third, inveterate enmity to the Gospel; in a fourth, heartless cruelty; and, it is probable, deep-rooted prejudices in all. Yet in all was the work of grace instantaneously effected; in all was the closed heart in a moment opened to the love and dominion of Christian truth and obedience. Still it would be wrong to view such cases as specimens of God's ordinary procedure. *He* can, under any circumstances, convey his grace to the hearts of sinners. At the same time, his usual rule in imparting it is, to give it only to those who seek it; and seek it, not coldly and languidly, but with importunate earnestness, in the diligent use of means. Before bestowing the blessing, he usually imparts a sense of its value, and earnest desires after its attainment. Before he opens the heart, he usually causes the sinner to feel that it is shut; to tremble at the guilt and danger which its closed condition involves, and to listen with the interest of deep personal concern to the voice of Him who says, "Behold! I stand at the door and knock." Hence, while the evangelical promise is "a new heart will I give unto you," a limitation is

added, " for all this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." And hence, in the narratives of conversion to the faith of the Gospel, which the New Testament brings under our notice, we usually see in the previous habits and occupations of the converts, something which indicates the preparation of the soil for the reception of the seed. Thus, the Ethiopian was, in the spirit of diligent enquiry, perusing the prophet Isaiah, when Philip mounted his chariot and opened to him the way of salvation. And " Cornelius was a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the poor, and prayed to God always," before Peter was sent to him to admit him to the privileges of the Gospel covenant. This, it is true, in no way deducts from the amount of the converted sinner's obligations to the grace of heaven, because the work of grace embraces all the previous steps as well as the final result. Still it is of great practical importance to attend to it. A due regard to the circumstance tends to protect us against sinfully abusing the grace of God; to shew us that God works upon men in conversion, not as mere machines, but in accordance with their rational and accountable natures; and to teach us, that though no instrumentality is effectual without his blessing, yet that blessing is wont to descend, not on the careless, the sensual, the worldly, and the profane, but on them who in faith and sincerity seek it, with active diligence and zeal pursue it, and with steady and persevering duty wait for it in the way of God's appointments. These are the lessons afforded us by the experience of Lydia;

and in her experience there is nothing peculiar. It reveals to us the general law of God's house; his method of grace in opening the hearts of sinners to the life and power of the Gospel. It only remains that—

In the *fifth* and last place, we view the gracious change here brought before us, in *its effects*. And in determining our present condition and future prospects, as accountable and immortal beings, to these it is our wisdom, with earnest and impartial scrutiny, to look. The heart, the *unseen* heart, is the special seat of the change produced by the Gospel. But the grace which renews the heart, purifies the affections and sanctifies the life. The new principles which it plants within prompt to new duties without; which, however much overlooked before, are now performed with careful and conscientious diligence: or if, as in the case of Lydia, diligence in outward performance previously existed, it now derives a quickening impulse from new motives and principles, which communicate to it a character and aspect in every essential respect new. Dead works are transformed into living sacrifices. The bondage of slaves gives place to the free-will offerings of children. The new heart, and the new spirit, become the parents of new obedience.

This new obedience Lydia exhibited in three interesting particulars mentioned in this narrative. 1. "*She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul*"—so attended to them, as to believe them as unquestionably true, to feel them as unspeakably important, and to act upon them as truths communicated, not to minister to the gratification of her intellect, or fancy, or affec-

tions, but to promote her salvation. Her religion did not, like that of many, terminate in hearing. She was too much in earnest to mistake the means for the end. Her heart was opened; and the Word preached, she treasured up there,—so as to have it at all times at hand—a guide in duty, a comforter in trouble, and a shield of defence in the hour of temptation. 2. She *shewed a holy concern for the spiritual welfare of her household.* While, by receiving baptism, she personally assumed the badge of the Christian profession, considering, at the same time, her household as part of herself, she saw the sacred rite administered to them also; and so far as it depended upon her, she put them in the way of being ingrafted into Christ, and made sharers in the promised and purchased blessings of the covenant. To this she was prompted, both by a sense of her responsibility to God, and her love to those who stood to her in a relation so near; and had she acted otherwise her conversion might well have been called in question. For nothing can be more true than the remark of Philip Henry, that "every man in religion, is *really* what he is *relatively.*" They whose religion is merely a creed, or a formal routine of outward observances, may manifest indifference to the spiritual welfare of their children and domestics; and while providing for the health of their bodies, they may leave their souls to sicken and die. But such as are Christians indeed are incapable of this. Every principle of their new nature protests against it, and prompts them to the use of every mean by which they, with whom they are so nearly connected by the ties, whether of nature or

of mutual dependence, may be also united to them by the bonds of grace—children and servants of the Most High—" members of the household of faith." Unless their Christianity is sadly defective, their domestic habits and arrangements bear consistent testimony to this; and say for them to all around them, what Joshua declared to the assembled tribes of old—"choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." 3. She *testified a right Christian spirit towards the instruments of her conversion.* " She besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us."—Conduct, on her part, such as it ought to be;—the natural and beautiful expression of two sentiments, both of them indicative of the gracious change upon her heart — gratitude to her spiritual benefactors, and a desire to enjoy the benefit of ampler intercourse with men, whose words were life and health to her soul. And wherever Christianity plants its foundations deep within us—wherever it truly opens the heart to the charities and sanctities of the Gospel, neither of these sentiments is slow in making its appearance; and in none are they found more active than in recent converts. *They* love the hands which have conveyed to them the heavenly treasure; and they delight in holding communion with persons of a kindred spirit. More especially do they prize the society of those whose Christian knowledge and experience are superior to their own. Indeed, when the great realities of the Gospel have penetrated the full depths of their spirits,

nothing else can interest them. To other subjects interesting, perhaps engrossing before, they lend a cold—a reluctant ear. And the longest day sometimes seems short, as, out of the fulness of overcharged hearts, they pour into the ears of Christians, whose sympathies can cheer, and counsels direct them — their mingled hopes and fears, and privileges, and trials as young believers. In all stages, indeed, of their spiritual progress, genuine Christians testify the social energies of their religion. They cannot live without Christian companionship. As in the days of Malachi, "they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another," so it is still, so it always will be. And wherever there is a Lydia, "whose heart the Lord hath opened to attend to the things" which belong to her peace, she will evidence the Spirit into which she has been baptized, by being the companion of those who, "partakers of like precious faith," can enter into her feelings, minister to her improvement, mitigate her trials, and be helpers of her joy, in the way that leads to the promised inheritance of the saints.

We have thus rapidly glanced at some of the more essential points connected with the important subject of conversion, as these have been suggested to us by the present narrative. We have done so, however, to little purpose, unless the result is a deep and influential impression of the unspeakable importance of this great Gospel change. In the world in which we live, we are all familiar with changes. They occur everywhere—in our persons, in our families, in our churches, in our neighbourhoods, in all our social relations, civil

and ecclesiastical. And there are many of these which affect us so deeply, either for good or evil, that we ought not to be indifferent to them if we could, and could not, if we would. But all such changes sink into insignificance compared to this. Is it a change still foreign to our experience? While it continues so, no other change that may befall us can be solidly beneficial. For God is against us; our hearts are the dwelling-place of the enemy of all good; we live without God, and die without hope. Have we, on the contrary, experienced it? Then every interest is provided for; and we possess a treasure which outweighs millions of worlds in value. While the present scene is our abode, all our trials are sanctified to us, and all our blessings are blessings indeed. And when we go hence, it is to a world where we shall dread no change, because none can arise there, but one that will add to us the lustre of new graces, and enable us to draw richer and more liberal supplies from the ever-flowing fountain of life and blessedness.

May the Lord vouchsafe to all of us that change of heart which forms the happy prelude to such joys; and may he "seal us with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Amen.

SERMON XI.

THE MERCY OF THE LORD TO THE CHILDREN OF THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.*

BY THE

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PSALM ciii. 17.

"*But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.*"

The language of this Psalm exhibits many instances of a structure very common in the sacred writings, by which the same idea, with a slight variation, is con-

* Preached before the Edinburgh Society for the Sons of the Clergy, 15th March, 1831.

veyed in the two clauses of a verse. One of those instances occurs in the passage, which has now been read, and is selected for the subject of your consideration at this time. The word righteousness here, as in many other places, is equivalent to mercy or beneficence; and the ever-enduring loving-kindness of our God, described in the first clause as from everlasting to everlasting, is in the second more precisely defined, as continued to the children's children of those who fear Him.

The Almighty hath done nothing in vain. From the greatest to the least of his creatures, from the most extensive system to the most simple, and apparently isolated object, there is no one without its use. Every organ of those wonderfully constructed bodies which he hath formed, serves some important purpose in the animal economy. Every power, every energy, every affection of the human soul, is implanted in it by him for some valuable end which it is fitted to promote, and is operated on by the means which His wisdom hath appointed for carrying forward our improvement here, and accomplishing our preparation for happiness hereafter. The dispensations of His Providence, and the suggestions of His Word, are made to influence the fears, the hopes, the desires, the sympathies, and all the capacities of emotion which are treasured up in the human breast, and to unite them in forming that complicated and unspeakably desirable result—a character restored to the image in which man was at first created.

Of those principles, there is no one more universal, more powerful, or more obviously beneficial, than

parental affection. In the inferior animals, with whom it is merely instinctive, it exercises a power to which every other habit and propensity seems to be subordinate. Under its dominion the most ferocious become mild and gentle, the most fearful, fierce and daring in the defence of their offspring, the feeblest and most indolent, indefatigable in providing for their subsistence. By its operation, the living tribes of earth are, in almost each individual instance, trained up to maturity, and prevented from perishing from off the surface of the globe. In man, especially when he is enlightened and civilized, it assumes a loftier bearing, and holds a more important place. In proportion as he emerges from barbarism, from that state in which the gratification of appetite or preservation of existence absorb every higher tendency, it becomes a characteristic of his rational nature, the most amiable and ennobling of his feelings, the most powerful instrument in the progressive improvement of the human race. When it is guarded by religious principle and sound judgment from the abuses to which all the feelings of mortality are liable, when it is purified and refined by the sacred and endearing habits of domestic life, and hallowed by the hope of immortality, it triumphs over every selfish inclination, and connects the successive generations of men by ties equally blessed to the present and the future inhabitants of earth. When the mother dwells on every look, and provides for every want, and watches every trace of the dawn of thought in her infant; when the father exerts his every power for the subsistence of his family, when he renounces

his own favourite indulgences that their enjoyments may be increased and multiplied, when he courts success that its honour may be reflected on them and its fruits redound to their benefit, how light seems every toil, how ample the compensation for every sacrifice, how highly enhanced the triumph of which those dear objects of his love are to reap the substantial fruits! When he succeeds in forming their minds to piety of feeling, and firmness of principle, in leading them to remember their Creator, and training them up in the way wherein they ought to go, in animating them to honourable exertion, and qualifying them to act in life a higher and a better part than he has himself been able to sustain—how precious is the recompence of his labours, how doubly valuable the bliss received and the benefits conferred, how interminable the prospect of improvement, opening from age to age on each succeeding race!

It is obvious, that under the diversified government of God, this, like every other principle, is made to produce the most valuable fruits. His Providence employs it to control selfishness, to restrain turbulent passion, to draw forth useful exertion from the individual, to supply a most powerful motive for acting uprightly and honourably. He directs its exercise, so as to guard the tender mind from temptation and every improper bias, to cherish kind affection and habitual devotion, to perpetuate the knowledge obtained, and acquisitions made, at every period of society, and to hand them down to latest posterity, in an unlimited progress of enlargement and amelioration.

Yet it is not only by its direct operation that parental love influences the human mind for good. The Almighty has been pleased to appeal to it in his Word as a motive to cherish godly fear and holy obedience. To mankind, he holds out a blessing on their posterity, as a most powerful incentive to compliance with the requisitions of his law. He declares, "that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Nor is this a solitary declaration. "The Lord is a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children, even to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, but showing mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments." The promise made to Abraham was, "Behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations; and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generation, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee, and I will be their God. In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "The children of thy servants," saith the Psalmist, "shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth. The generation of the upright

shall be blessed." "The promise," said the Apostle Peter to the Jews, "is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call."

That these promises were amply and literally fulfilled under the Jewish dispensation, is well known to all who are conversant with Scripture history. "I have been young," saith David, "and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth, and his seed is blessed." Though the Christian revelation, in directing our views to another and a better world, renders the vicissitudes of this life less marked and less momentous, still an attentive observer may discern the fulfilment of this gracious declaration in the ordinary and general course of human affairs. You daily feel with esteem and admiration, the influence of that integrity and benevolence, that upright and affectionate spirit which has been fostered by a careful, enlightened, and Christian education. You see the unsullied fame of the parent descend on the son and recommend him to notice, confidence, and employment. You see the friend of the father, in the beautiful spirit of the king of Israel, who in the hour of his most splendid triumphs, in the fullest tide of his prosperity enquired, Is there one of the house of Saul yet alive, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? you see him seeking out the family,—perhaps withdrawn from the world, and apparently destitute—of him to whom his soul was knit, drawing them forth into notice, relieving their necessities, encouraging

their efforts, and setting them forth with a fair prospect of success in the paths and duties of active life. Were it given you to enter more deeply into the counsels of the Almighty, and to trace more accurately than you now do, the ways of his providence, you might behold proofs still more decisive of his righteousness to the children of his servants, in soothing their afflictions, in supplying their wants, in rescuing them from danger, in raising up to them friends, in prospering their labours, and crowning their exertions with that happy termination which he only can bestow.

Such views of the divine procedure, slightly and imperfectly as their outline has been traced, must fill our minds with admiration of the wisdom of Him by whom our souls and bodies were formed, and who governs and conducts us by laws and motives adapted to every branch of that nature in which He hath created us. In filling the hearts of parents with an indelible attachment to their children, he not only prompts them to those exertions which contribute so largely, as we have seen they do, to the happiness and improvement of mankind, but renders them capable of appreciating, and disposed to comply with those inducements to obedience which are suggested by his promise of a blessing on their posterity. What parent who reflects can resist their influence? who, with a heart to feel, would not endeavour to keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them, when assured that his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him, and his righteousness to children's children? In what an amiable aspect do we here behold our

heavenly Father portrayed! Well is it said, that he draws us with the cords of love and the bands of a man. He addresses himself to every exalted, every kind, every endearing affection in leading us to serve and obey him. He reveals the glories of his character that men may reverence and fear him. He loads us with benefits that gratitude may attach us to his service. He giveth us exceeding great and precious promises that hope may exalt us above temptation; and he works on the resistless power of parental affection, that we may strive to secure, for those whose welfare we hold far dearer than our own, the blessings which he hath promised to the offspring of the righteous. Let those who prize the fruits of this affection, those who feel its power and desire its gratification, unite in loving and praising him by whom its value is so graciously recognized, and its most fervent aspirations so amply fulfilled.

If there be one branch of Christian conduct in which, more than in another, it becomes you to be followers of God as dear children, it is in doing good to the children of those who have loved and served him. In so doing you imitate those dispensations of his providence in which his unerring wisdom is most conspicuously displayed. You copy the most amiable and affecting manifestation of his fatherly benevolence. You repay, in some measure, the benefits which good men have conferred during their lives on that society of which you are members, and perhaps on yourselves as individuals. You confer on them a boon which they desire more earnestly, and prize more highly, than any personal favour,

the anticipation of which would have cheered the lingering spirit, and banished the last remnant of earthly anxiety from the bed of death. You contribute to perpetuate on earth the principles, the feelings, the habits by which they were governed, and encourage the race to come to put their trust in God and honour all his precepts. Than this no occupation can be more truly honourable. You follow, in however humble and remote a sphere, the footsteps of Him whose name is holy, whose wisdom is unerring, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. You are associated with him, if I may use the expression, in following out the purposes of his wisdom and his love. You become the honoured instruments of his mercy and righteousness. You are entrusted with the charge of administering a portion of his treasures and dispensing a share of his bounty. You are enabled to apply to purposes, which you know are well pleasing in his sight, a part of that substance and those talents with which he has endowed you. You find an opportunity of expressing, in a manner more forcible than by words, your grateful sense of his goodness, and you are permitted to make for his bounty the only return in your power, and one of which he hath solemnly declared his acceptance. Above all, you thus approve yourselves the true friends of that divine Saviour, whose mission on earth was an errand of love, and who went about continually doing good to the bodies and souls of men.

You can be at no loss, my brethren, to discern the direct application of what has been said, to the occasion on which you are now assembled. If you admit the

obligation which lies on you as men and Christians, to show kindness to the children and the children's children of those who fear God, you must own that no charity has a more powerful claim on your beneficence than that which is conducted by the Society on whose behalf I have been selected to address you this day. The object of their association is to procure for the orphan children of ministers of the Church of Scotland the benefits of education—opportunities of exercising a liberal profession—and aid in their struggles with the hardships and difficulties, whether of early, or of more advanced life. It would be superfluous to trace here the progress of this institution. It has sprung up in the midst of you, and every step of its progress has been open to your inspection. It is equally unnecessary to prove, that their application for your support and aid has some title to attention. Yet, as the whole extent of that title has not been always considered or appreciated, perhaps you will bear with me a little longer while I endeavour to state, as I trust I shall be enabled to do, without undue professional assumption, some of the services for which you stand indebted to the fathers, and which it becomes you to acknowledge by liberality to their children.

It may be thought that I go too far back in referring the introduction of religious truth and religious liberty into our land, to the labours of the Scottish clergy. Yet true it is, that the glorious Reformation was chiefly brought about, under God, by the exertions of the early ministers of that Church, and that its principles are still supported mainly by the labours of

their successors. So often as we exhort you to search the Scriptures, to try all things, and hold by that which is right; to bear in mind your own personal responsibility to your Almighty Judge; and to beware of interposing any human influence or human authority between you and your God, we assert and defend that right of private judgment and freedom of religious opinion which are the essential characters of the Reformed Church, and are thus the instruments of preserving you from the slavery of a degrading superstition, the interference of fallible human judgment with your faith, and the perversion of your hope by empty formalities and fantastic delusions.

Scarcely less valuable have been their services to the cause of civil liberty. With the clouds of superstition, the chains of despotism were banished from our land. In introducing the glorious light of truth, the servants of God destroyed the foundations of political as well as spiritual tyranny. On every occasion when liberty of conscience or of conduct has been invaded, they have stood forth its zealous, enlightened, and fearless assertors. To those institutions by which our religious and civil privileges are guarded and secured, they have uniformly paid the homage of respectful deference, and spared no effort in their vindication and defence. When, therefore, you worship the God of your fathers without fear or molestation—when you pursue your ordinary lawful occupations uninterrupted and undisturbed; when, day by day, you rise up and lie down in safety, under the safeguard of regular government and the protection of equal laws;

and when you contrast your condition with that of the subjects of despotic authority, or the victims of turbulent violence—think what you owe to those who, under heaven, have contributed to procure and perpetuate the blessings of freedom, order, and security.

Another debt of gratitude is due by the inhabitants of this land to the ministers of their national religion, for the large share they have had in instituting, and keeping up in all its vigour, our invaluable system of national education. With them originated that institution which brings the means of instruction in the most precious and useful branches of knowledge, within the reach of the poorest and humblest of our countrymen. To their unceasing attention and superintendence is it owing, that this system subsists in all its vigour and purity, that thousands around us are daily trained up in religious impressions, furnished with the powers and materials of thought, and enabled to enter on the occupations of life with habits of method, regularity and foresight. Triumphing as you do in the acknowledged intelligence, religious principle, purity of morals, and persevering energy, which distinguish even the poorest of your national peasantry—you cannot be indifferent to the means by which these results are produced, or unmindful of the labours to which, under heaven, their existence and continuance are in no small degree to be ascribed.

The poor you have always with you. To relieve their distresses and supply their wants is a most sacred, yet most difficult duty. To afford them the aid they require, without, at the same time, fostering indolence

and encouraging vice, is a task, the successful performance of which, has in most instances, been found beyond the utmost efforts of assiduous application, and human ingenuity. If, in our land, these objects have been more nearly attained than elsewhere, if the spirit of honest independence has been cherished, if idleness and profligacy have been discouraged, if substantial relief has been generally administered to the really necessitous, and if these ends have been accomplished in a manner the least mortifying to the feelings of the sufferer, I need not ask you by whose instrumentality this has been brought about. Every one, in the least acquainted with our parochial organization, must be aware, that the labours of the parochial clergy; their fidelity and economy in the administration of the fund, the management of which is confided chiefly to their direction; their intimate acquaintance with the character and wants of their people; and the association of the relief which they bestow with the soothing influence of their daily ministrations, have had a large share in limiting the extent of pauperism, in mitigating its evils, and in preserving our land from the degrading and demoralizing effects of a system less wisely devised and less faithfully administered.

Still more important are the benefits derived to society, from their general purity of conduct, and the useful example which their lives exhibit. It is not denied, that there have been, and may be, some melancholy exceptions to this rule; some instances of the existence of that greatest of all inconsistencies, and direst of curses to a district, an unprincipled and im-

moral clergyman. Still, it must be admitted, by all who know anything of our country, that such instances are unusual, and portentous from their rarity as well as their infamy. I may appeal boldly to all who hear me, for the character of the clergy of Scotland as a body. I may ask whether, with a very few exceptions, they have not been pre-eminently distinguished for simplicity and integrity of purpose, for fervent but unostentatious piety, for an unblemished and circumspect deportment in all the relations of life, and for the habitual practice of zealous and enlightened charity to all classes of their fellow-mortals. The effect of such a character, exhibited by a numerous body of men dispersed over every part of the kingdom, in adding weight to their instructions, and affording a model which multitudes are induced to imitate, must be admitted by all who are capable of thinking, and its value must be recognized by all to whom the best interests of their fellow-mortals are dear.

Let me further remind you, that such services are not rendered without many sacrifices. For no profession is a more extensive, laborious, and costly education required. The candidate for the office of the ministry must devote to his preparatory studies a series of years, a quantity of exertion in the most diversified studies, and even an outlay of money, which in any other pursuit would, with ordinary talents and diligence, conduct to the highest honours, or the most splendid opulence. When he enters on his duties, his lot is often cast, most probably for life, in a remote, and perhaps almost unheard-of district, far from the inter-

course of polished society, from all opportunities of refined and intellectual conversation. A moderate competency, placing him merely above want, but far from adequate to the warmth of his bounty, or the liberal education of his children, is all that he can reasonably expect to enjoy of this world's goods. To power, or fame, or fortune he can rarely aspire. He does not indeed grudge the sacrifices which he makes. His soul is bent on higher aims, and his labours directed to objects infinitely more important. But it is for you who witness his conduct, and reap the fruits of his self-denial, to estimate these as they deserve, and to acknowledge by your kindness the value of his labours and the depth of his devotedness.

Survey, I beseech you, the extent of his daily and hourly labours. Think of the amount of forethought, of patience, of mental discipline, of secret devotion, which are necessary to prepare him for the discharge of his duties. Think of the obstacles he has to surmount in struggling to subdue the spiritual pride, the vanity of worldly wisdom, the evil heart of unbelief, the obduracy of profligate habit in one class, and to enlighten the dulness of tardy apprehension, the obtuseness of neglected education and an uncultivated understanding, or to awaken the insensibility of a conscience seared by habitual vice in another. Think of the revolting scenes with which he must be conversant while visiting the abodes of squalid wretchedness and loathsome disease, listening to the blasphemous ravings of a hardened unbeliever, or striving to combat the harrowing despair of a dying sinner. Think how

diversified must be his attainments and his exertions, while he at one time holds intercourse with the highest in the land, as their equal in intelligence and their adviser in the most important duties of their station; at another associates with the most learned and illustrious, with the knowledge and talent competent to follow their train of thinking, and maintain his footing in their society; and at a third mingles with the poorest and humblest as a friend and brother, entering into all their feelings, lowering his conversation without effort to the tone of theirs, and sparing them, by the meekness of his deportment, any painful or mortifying sense of his superiority to themselves. I speak not of the public services of the pulpit, immense as I believe to be their importance, and unspeakable the benefits arising from them. But if you have had the happiness of living on the footing on which Christians ought to live with him who undertook the care of your spiritual concerns, think, I entreat you, how much your children have been blessed by the suggestions of his prudence, and the kindness of his approbation; how much of peace, and serenity, and resignation have been shed around the death-bed of a revered parent, or a beloved partner, through the agency of his admonitions and his prayers; how often, in the hour of your deepest affliction, his presence and conversation have been the means of soothing your wounded spirits, and raising you to consolation and hope.

Still stronger is the plea I would urge, of the destitution in which the families of clergymen are often left, arising from the very sacrifices which they make, and the services they render in discharge of their duty.

They have not the means of maintaining the decencies of their station, of answering the demands which are hourly and irresistibly made on their bounty, and of obtaining for their children the benefits of a liberal education, and, at the same time, in ordinary cases, bequeathing them any thing like an independence. Their habits, their pursuits, their occupations, are incompatible with lucrative employments, and exclude even the possibility of accumulation. In the event of their premature death, an event, alas! but too common not to be anticipated as abundantly probable, their children are for the most part left unprovided for, as well as unprotected. Few scenes can be conceived more affecting than the breaking up of a clergyman's family in such circumstances. They must at once bid farewell to the roof which sheltered their infancy, under which their childish pastimes were enjoyed, and their earliest habits formed. They must part, most likely for ever, from every scene and every object with which their early pleasures and first remembered thoughts are associated. They must renounce the limited measure of comfort and indulgence to which they have been accustomed, and give up those prospects of cultivation and improvement which they had just begun to prize. They must go forth amongst strangers to pine unknown and unnoticed, or descend to those sordid labours for which their habits and feelings are equally unfitted. To rescue them from such depression, to continue to them the advantages of a liberal education, to animate them with new hope, and open to them the path of enlightened exertion, usefulness, and independence, are the objects of that Society

whose cause I have endeavoured to plead, whose claims on your liberality I trust I have succeeded in establishing, and in whose name I now again entreat your aid and co-operation in their labour of love.

Were any further notice wanting to excite your liberality, I might remind you of the probability that your bounty will not be thrown away. If we revolve the brightest pages of our national history, we shall find them adorned with the names of those who boasted being the sons of clergymen. If we look around us in the world, we shall find them occupying a distinguished place in every walk of life, and every liberal profession. If we dwell on our own personal experience, we shall find their persons associated with the recollection of the piety, the wisdom, the kindness which we most highly venerated, the friendship we most fondly cherished, the regrets which lie deepest in the secret of our hearts. You may reasonably hope, that such will continue to be the fruits of the same early habits and early education, that those whom you now assist at their outset in life may prove no less distinguished ornaments to their country and benefactors to the human race, and that in contributing to their education you contribute to provide for every profession, and especially for the ministry of the Gospel, individuals as highly qualified, as useful, and as beloved as those whom you now most highly admire, or on whose memory you dwell with the most affectionate remembrance, the most afflicting sense of their removal.

May the Almighty give all these considerations their due weight, and to his name be the praise.

SERMON XII.

MAN THE APPARENT, GOD THE REAL AGENT, IN THE WORK OF SALVATION.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH TAYLOR GOODSIR,

MINISTER OF LARGO.

PHILLIPIANS II. 12, 13.

"*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*"

There is a truth of appearance which differs from the truth of reality. That which meets the eye, or strikes on the ear, may often convey an impression true for the sense, but not true for the reason. Thus do

many apparent contradictions present themselves, not only in those departments of knowledge which bear more immediately on the conduct of life, but also in the regions of speculative and natural enquiry.

The rude and erroneous notions of the heavens, formed from the first imperfect study and superficial observation of them, have been embodied in almost all languages, and still form the creed of the illiterate in almost all nations. Men, of course, at first take for granted the impressions of their senses. The shepherds, while watching their flocks on the plains by night, behold the countless hosts of heaven pursue their stately march in an almost unvaried course. Star after star, constellation after constellation, they see harmoniously roll from east to west, and successively merge beneath the western wave. They view with admiration, and hail with joy, the sun rising in giant strength from his eastern couch, shining in glorious apparel, and rejoicing like a strong man to run a race. They no more doubt that the stars thus run their appointed courses, that the sun rises at morn and sets at eventide, than they doubt that the curtains of darkness are withdrawn at his approach, and again drop at his departure. If they actually see all this, shall they not believe what they see?

But the better instructed man, who looks upon these objects from a right position, knows that belief to be erroneous which is founded on what he sees. He, too, beholds the glorious orb with giant strength travel on his

daily path, but knows that notwithstanding he is the steadfast centre of revolving worlds. He, too, admires, while tracing the mystic dance of starry hosts, but knows that nevertheless this dance is a beauteous illusion. He may still speak of the mazy evolutions which Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, with all the sister groups, perform around the starry pole, or of the sun coming forth from his chamber in the east and rejoicing like a strong man to run a race, but only in common discourse would he thus talk. For he knows that in this whole subject, what he sees with the mind contradicts what he sees with the eye, and that the real truth differs entirely from the apparent.

Now such seeming contradictions are caused by viewing the same objects from different positions. Men, in their ordinary language, expressing merely what they see, when looking from the little platform of this world, will always speak of the heavenly bodies rising, running their courses, and setting. All this is in exact accordance with what they behold from their ordinary position. But when they look on the same objects from another position, which in imagination they can assume, all such language and all such notions will be erroneous and must be changed. In one sense, and for ordinary use, the common language is quite correct; in another sense, and for another use, it is quite wrong. In one position the common language suits every purpose, but change the position, and new language suited to new ideas and new ends must forthwith be framed.

This change of language and of conception, which we have seen to follow necessarily from a change of position, is not confined to natural things, but extends to moral and religious subjects. For there is a question of the most vital importance, which has been the source of much dispute between professing Christians. Two great parties have held opposite opinions on this subject. The question at issue is, does man take any part, or what part, in the work of his regeneration or salvation? Is that great change which a Christianized man hath undergone, a change which the man himself, either in part, or in whole, either by origination or after completion, can produce.

No one can fail to observe, even after the most cursory perusal of Scripture, that while numerous passages declare, that man's salvation is entirely the work of God; on the other hand, there are many passages which speak in the plainest manner, as if man by his own powers carried on this work. Therefore it is plain, that if any person choose to enter on the discussion of this question, with a predetermination of supporting one particular side, without attending to the bearings of the whole subject, or with any other similar unfairness of mind, that he may continue to resist every argument brought against him, without seeming to himself to be fighting against the truth. Now our text brings the two apparently opposing views of this subject directly in front of each other. It is a summing up of all the texts that can be brought forward on either side. It brings into collision, within a space no larger

than a point, all the forces which were heretofore widely scattered. If, then, there be any real contradiction between the two classes of Scripture assertions in our text, the contradiction will surely be discovered, or from it a reconciliation will be elicited. "Work out," saith the Apostle, "your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

We have already seen how apparent contradictions may be produced, by looking at the same objects from different positions. The language expressive of what is seen from one position, may oppose the language expressive of what is seen from another position. Still, so far from this being any real difficulty or contradiction, when the subject is viewed in all its bearings, a complete harmony prevails. Let us, in a similar manner, view the question contained in our text, so that if all be not quite satisfied, our own minds may be set at rest.

First, The work of regeneration and sanctification may be viewed from an earthly position. The Christian may trace all the motions of his soul, all its phases and changes, from the platform of this world, or from the common ground of human nature. From this point, what view will meet his eyes? Why he will only see the operation of human motives, and the working of human powers. Whatsoever work has to be performed, the man will see human motives applied, human choice put into action, human passion

impelling, human will deciding, and just as much will he see or be conscious of the operation of these human powers, with nothing else apparently to interfere with them, as he will perceive human hands performing the work, human tongue declaring the sentiment, or human countenance giving forth the expression of approbation or disgust. Let it be the case of a sinner repenting of a long course of sinful conduct. Let the conscience be giving utterance to that awful sentence which it passeth, when man is summoned to answer for his actions in the court within his own breast. Let the inner world of man be undergoing those fearful convulsions of its elements to which it is liable, when the small still voice of God's vicegerent is felt, rather than heard to utter, that dread word which shivers into atoms all refuges of lies, just as the awful denunciation of God's wrath shall break up and shatter at the last day the firm foundations and material refuges of the external world. If it be such a convulsion of the moral elements of the soul which is seen or felt, there may appear in all this nothing more than the condemning voice of conscience, the breaking up of human pride, and the crushing of human obstinacy. Human powers are employed, human nature is wrought upon, and human passions are beheld sweeping along in tempest force.

Again, the man may behold a change come over the soul, which was lately overcast with such gloom and filled with such confusion. He may see the little world within recovering from its shocks, he may

perceive the clouds and gloom which overcast it dispelled, the conscience appeased, and now with calm voice whispering the directions for duty; faith no longer dead or dim, but lively and bright with the light of truth; hope gilding every prospect, and gladdening the whole heart, while love moves about, seeking with unwearied energy to confer benefits on all. What does the man see in all this, but the full and blessed play of a pure and reformed human nature.

It is quite undeniable, that they are human powers which are felt either in the full operation of a sweeping moral change, or in the active and regular performance of duty in all these cases. Man feels not any other power putting its hand, as it were, to any part of his spiritual frame, to adjust or change that.—He feels not any such power, so as to be able to say, now it is working. "The kingdom of heaven cometh" in no such way, "it cometh without observation." So also are there many passages of Scripture, in which man is addressed as if there were no need for any power to change his nature, but as if he could do that for himself. Thus are we told to "put off the old man which is corrupt concerning the former conversation, according to the deceitful lusts;" and just as if we could do this great work, we are immediately ordered to do a still greater —and "put ye on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The work of repentance and reformation therefore is begun and carried on in man, so far as our conscious-

ness can tell us, by the instrumentality of our own powers. So far as we can see it and feel it, judging as men looking from an earthly position and using a common language, the enunciation of the condemning voice of conscience, the fear and horror thus produced, the earnest desire of escaping from this condition, the consequent willingness to entertain a new form of belief, and pursue a new line of conduct, those things would seem to embrace the whole of what takes place in working out salvation with fear and trembling. But if any man, resting on the fact, that human motives, powers, and faculties are thus seen and felt to work, and taking the additional fact into account, that the Bible addresses man in such a strain as to countenance and confirm this, should proceed from thence to deny the operation of superhuman power and the interference of divine influence, he would immediately land himself in the grossest absurdities and impieties. Just as the men who view the heavens from their station on earth, and frame their conceptions and language on impressions thus received, must form partial and erroneous judgments; such also must be the case with those observers of the Christian life.

The Christian observer who founded his creed and framed his language on what first met his sight, or on what he felt, must land himself in absurdities and contradictions. The answer of such an observer to the question, can "the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" in all consistency should be, that they can. The belief in such a power of metamorphosis existing

in these cases, would not be one whit more monstrous than the belief, that those who were "conceived in sin and born in iniquity" could, by any exertion of innate power and energy, change their own vile and corrupt nature into heavenly purity and celestial brightness. For even, although we grant to those observers, that it is by the instrumentality of his own mental and moral powers that the change is wrought, and although we cannot see or feel any power interfering with these through the whole course of change, still it remains to be accounted for, how a new bent is given to the soul, and how a new kind of work is performed by it. The man who can assert, that human nature injured, and perverted in all its powers as it is, can still, of itself, become a "new creature," need not wonder at the absurdity of those who cling to the popular belief, and use without qualification the popular phraseology in natural things, nor at the man who should aver that the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots; and, in addition to all this, the supporter of man's capability to work out his own salvation in whole or in part, must land himself in all the difficulties of upholding a creed entirely at variance with much of what is plainest in Bible language and in Bible statement.

Secondly, Let us now, in the next place, examine our subject in that light which is thrown on it when we look from a new position. We would view that whole process and work of regeneration which every true Christian must have undergone, with a special

reference to God, its originator and finisher. For this work of renewal received its first impulse from the hand of an almighty and omniscient God. That subtle strength and influence whereby the work is carried on springs from the same high source, and when at length the last touch is applied to the finished work, that last touch is applied by the unerring hand of God.

That knowledge belongs not to man which would enable him to explain the exact manner in which he who "worketh in secret," and carries on all his plans behind a veil of deepest mystery, performs this work. Man does not at present possess such an acuteness of observation, nor indeed such powers, as knowledge like unto this demands for its attainment. Then will be a suitable time for him to strive after such acquirements, or to grieve over the want of them, when he shall have thoroughly mastered all the mysteries of his own moral and intellectual nature, and shall have found it no difficult thing to explain, "how in God we live, and move, and have our being," though, at the same time, moral and accountable agents. When he shall discern the hidden powers and latent energies whereby the Almighty works all the marvellous changes in nature's stupendous machinery, or in nature's curious laboratories, then may he think it hard that he is left in ignorance of the exact method by which his own soul is brought from a state of spiritual death into the vivid day-light of truth, and active pursuit of holiness—but not till then. At present, let the humble and docile Christian rejoice that he may rest with entire reliance

upon the power of God being put forth to renew his nature—and when he finds himself enabled to obey the Divine will, he may be as sure that this power has come down from God, as he is confident, that all the operations of nature's vast system depend for their movement and continuance on the same prevailing energy. The Christian may ground his belief of this on two most immovable bases, even upon the known fact, that the heart of man is evil, and prone of itself only to evil, from his youth upwards; and on the no less firm ground, that the Bible hath assured him, that it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

But let us still further observe, from this same position which we have assumed, how we are saved from that inconsistency into which those fall who assert, on the ground of experience or of Scripture, that man, by his own unaided powers, works out his salvation. When they make their bold assertions, we think that they avow one of the greatest possible anomalies. They, in as many words, assert that the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots. They assert that a creature can change its own nature. They assert what is tantamount to man's being independent of God. For these reasons, we cannot coincide with the advocates of human fitness, either to commence or carry out this great work.

Do we still hold, then, that human powers and human faculties are at all engaged in this work? We do so to the fullest extent. We still maintain that

when the awakened sinner first starts from his spiritual slumber, hearing an awful sound, a thousand times more dread than the thunder, when it rolls growling over the desolation of a world, more terrible, in that the sound is low and whispered, but still has power to shake his whole moral frame to its lowest depths, and to awake thence as fit attendants on such a scene, a myriad of now forgotten and long past sins and iniquities, he is shaken from his apathetic repose by the voice of conscience. We still hold that when anguish, dismay, and terrible confusion seize hold upon him, so that the sinner knows not whether to flee, and to procure forgetfulness, would fain call upon the very rocks to fall upon him and crush him into annihilation; all this is the effect of that fearful wound of the Spirit, which no man can bear. And, again, when the first glad tidings meet his ear, like music by night, or a voice from heaven, assuring him that there is the balsam of consolation for his wounded spirit, and that there is strong hope even for him, if he believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and when the glad news seems to dart through him like an electric shock, such power has it to raise his drooping spirit, and to fill his soul with joy—we hold that the human intellect and human heart are all in vigorous play within the man. So, in like manner, throughout the whole process which follows, even from the first dawning of faith, forwards, until the man walks in the fullest light of Christian knowledge, and in the freest vigour of Christian manhood, we assert that human nature, renewed human nature,

no doubt, but still human nature, is in full and free play.

But whose power unfelt the while, unloosened the dumb tongue of conscience, so that it might speak its own language? Whose power and wisdom threw the whole soul of the man into that state of confusion and irregular energy, which inflicted an awful temporary punishment, and which, left to itself, would have kept him on earth suffering the same torments which wring the damned in hell? Who, again, by means of his word, sacraments, and all holy appliances brought the inner world of man out of its horrid confusion, and stamped upon it some of these features which, when completed in heaven, shall restore him to a heavenly nature? Who was behind the scenes arranging all the processes, and administering all the forces by which human nature has been made to undergo such revolutions, that it might issue forth at length a new creature, clothed in the beauty of holiness, and shone upon by the beams of God and Christ's reconciled countenance? Who could do all this except that God who first made man and created all things—that God who knows what is in man, and alone wields all the elements of intellectual, moral, and physical nature? Yes, the Holy Ghost, even God, reneweth man by his unerring power, and dwelleth within the renewed soul as in a holy temple, so that it may will and do of God's good pleasure; but let it ever be remembered, that this new creature is only to be recognized, when a correspondency is traceable between all the thoughts,

feelings, and emotions of the man, and that perfect pattern or type set before us in the Word of God.

From the point whence we are now viewing the work of salvation, the Christian duties are seen to stand out in the boldest relief. The attention is drawn towards them in the strongest manner. The Christian is thus led to look into his mental and moral condition with the utmost solicitude. He must study the Word of God, that manual and directory, by a constant perusal and consultation of which he can alone hope to gain an insight into his own nature, and obtain the necessary directions for his spiritual guidance. Nor will such an one feel any doubt or difficulty arise in his mind, when in one passage he is told that God worketh in him both to will and to do, while in another passage close by, he reads that he must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. For he bows down his soul in reverent submission before God, the Father and Sustainer of his spirit, who alone can breathe into it the elements and energies of a new creature. He will discover not the least inconsistency between this and the most urgently repeated commands to exert his own powers. For, looking upon the whole from a heavenly position, and understanding the whole in a spiritual sense, he will at once see the inevitable result of the divine operations and of the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost within him. And what must be that result? To fit his faculties for discharging their functions; to give speech to the dumb tongue of conscience; to give life to faith, that glorification of the human reason; to

give edge and keenness to every higher and nobler feeling of his nature; to erect his whole energies to such a pitch of strength, that he may resist and overcome sin and Satan; in short, to put on him the whole armour of God, which he may feel not in the mere process of assuming, but knows well that he hath gained by the victories he thereby achieveth.

Is there in all this any thing fitted to depress the energies of human nature in Christians, or tending to make them recline in a dozing apathy until the Spirit shall appear to them in some manner they wot not how, and bear them aloft as on eagle's pinions, they know not where, but, at any rate, to some heavenly abode of seraphic holiness, and pleasing, but inert righteousness. Or, is there not much rather in all this, the strongest motive wherefore a man should arise, and exert himself with utmost energy. God deems the human mind and heart proper means whereby to work, and He has promised to confer new powers and new energies upon these; should not this therefore act as the strongest stimulus on man, and lead him to exert his mind, to open his heart, and give scope to all his feelings, agreeably to Bible instructions, praying all the time fervently for grace and strength from above. God hath said that His kingdom cometh not with observation, and that as the wind bloweth where it listeth, so is it with the Spirit. Can men be chargeable with guilt, then, if they act in spiritual matters in the same manner as they do in worldly things. When floats the richly freighted vessel, prepared to

sail for some far distant emporium, where wealth and pleasure shall be the lawful rewards of human industry, will the commander of that vessel not move from his station, until he get exactly such an amount of favourable wind and weather as meets his wishes in all respects? If he did so, might he not meanwhile lose all chance of gain, without getting what he wished, and does he not rather employ his utmost skill to take advantage of ordinary states of weather. In like manner should the Christian act. He also is bound upon a voyage of awful length; he, too, hath a huge interest at stake, the largest and most momentous that man can have; he, too, needs the prosperous gales of heaven to waft him forwards in his course—let him then learn from his brother of this world, and take advantage of every means, institute, and appliance, which God hath graciously put within his reach on earth, and in time. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be

able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Thus ye shall be able to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, seeing that it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

SERMON XIII.

CHARITY THE CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS BARCLAY, A.M.,
MINISTER OF CURRIE.

JOHN xiii. 35.

"*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*"

If we are to fix on any single quality as the peculiar and distinguishing characteristic of a Christian, we must look for it among his affections, rather than among his opinions. The profession of the faith is a

sign sometimes absolutely false, often equivocal, never universal. Hypocrisy and corruption daily conceal themselves under the mask of religious profession, and hence that profession cannot be assumed as a universal characteristic; it is not applicable to all; it cannot be recognized and felt by all; it cannot, in short, distinguish all the disciples of Jesus of every sect and denomination of Christians.

But there is a sure, clear, and characteristic mark of distinction: sure, because it proceeds from the heart; clear, because it stamps its impression on all the actions of life; and characteristic, because it is the basis on which the morality of the Gospel rests, and a principle which pervades all its doctrines; and, to sum up all in one word, that which our blessed Lord himself points out as the distinguishing badge of all his followers. It is *charity*, or brotherly love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

It can scarcely be necessary to premise, that in speaking of the brotherly love which is here declared to be the characteristic of a Christian disciple, we must guard against confounding this evangelical principle with that natural feeling of benevolence, which has been called, with much beauty, "the milk of human kindness." The one is an impulse which has no regard to any higher sanction than the inclination of the agent; the other is the result of religious principle, and has a constant reference to the will of God. The one is purely the dictate of nature, and may exert itself with much force in the heart which has never

been renewed by grace; the other is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and can reside only in the heart which that Spirit has renewed and sanctified. In a word, the one is nature working without faith; the other is "faith working by love."

When we speak of the *characteristic* of a true disciple, what do we understand by the term? What does it imply? It evidently is, to conform to the instructions and the example of his master. These two ideas comprehend all the duties which result from that relation; and, therefore, the professing Christian does not answer to the glorious title of a "disciple of Christ," except in so far as he takes the doctrine of Christ for his rule, and the conduct of Christ for his model. Now, it is proposed to shew, in the first place, that charity, or love to man, pervades the doctrine of Christ; and, in the second place, that it was the animating principle of his conduct: from which propositions, it necessarily follows, that whoever does not habitually cherish and practise this grace, is not a Christian.

I. The limits of a single discourse will not permit me to enter into all the details of which this subject is susceptible. The divine principle of charity extends its influence through all the branches of the evangelical system. Springing from the bosom of God, it diffuses into all the doctrines of Jesus a benign influence, communicating to the minutest precept, life, beauty, and energy. It is every where visible; it pervades the whole and every part; there is no truth which does

not bear its impression, no promise which does not reflect its image.

Instead, therefore, of tracing it through all the subordinate branches of the Christian system, let us view its general application to the doctrines of Christianity respecting *the character of God, the principles of moral duty, and the nature of future happiness.*

If we advert to *the ideas of God which the Gospel inspires*—if we contemplate with attention the different aspects under which it represents the Supreme Being, we shall find that, in this interesting picture, the most prominent attributes—those which most frequently and most vividly strike our eyes, are precisely those which are founded in love. The power of God is undoubtedly painted in the most magnificent colours; his wisdom, his justice, his holiness, shine with a splendour and glory eminently calculated to impress us with admiration and reverence. But these perfections of the Deity, glorious as they are, seem to fade before his goodness. It seems as if the Saviour of the world felt a peculiar delight in representing the Author of our being in this affecting view: he appears to have been anxious to impress strongly on our minds the interesting truth, that God loves us—that he watches incessantly for our good—that all the wonders of his power, all the counsels of his wisdom, and all the dispensations of his providence and grace, have the happiness of his children for their great and ultimate end.

Are we to be instructed in the relation in which God stands to us? The Gospel employs all that is expressive and affecting in human language; it arrays the

Supreme Being in the tenderest sentiments which it can find in the human heart. The Deity, as it were, divests his awful attributes of their overpowering grandeur, in order to exhibit himself to us in the amiable and affecting character of *a Father*. Of this endearing relation, he displays all the compassion, all the protection, and all the indulgence. For so many testimonies of love, what have we returned? insensibility and ingratitude, disobedience and rebellion. Still we are his children; still he holds out to us the everlasting arms of his mercy. We were wandering in the valley of the shadow of death, plunged in the depths of ignorance and depravity: he caused the Sun of Righteousness to rise upon us. We were dead in trespasses and sins; God manifested his infinite love in giving us life by Jesus Christ. "God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Such are the ideas of God which the Gospel inspires; ideas often repeated in every variety of form and expression, but always energetic and affecting; ideas so predominant in the Gospel, that John, the beloved disciple, who had imbibed in the bosom of his Master the most correct conceptions, employs this single quality to represent the Divine Being. "God," says he, "is love;" ideas, in fine, of which the same Apostle deeply impresses on our minds the importance, in that beautiful and comprehensive proposition which contains the sum and substance of what I am now endeavouring to prove—"he that loveth not his brother, knoweth not God, for God is love."

Let us next consider *the principle of moral duty* which Christianity inculcates. This is charity or love. This, in the Gospel of Christ, is the great source from which flow all the duties of man to man—the pivot on which the whole of Christian morality turns. On this cord of love, according to the energetic expression of our Lord, " hang all the law and the prophets." And, in fact, it is easy to comprehend, that a heart in which this sentiment has taken deep root, contains in itself the seeds of every virtue, since there is none which has not some relation to the twofold love of God and our neighbour. Thus it is declared by the Apostle John, that " he who loves has fulfilled the whole law;" because all the duties which the Divine law imposes on us, having God and our neighbour for their object, it is evident, that he who is animated with a sincere love to God and his neighbour, will not indulge a thought or sentiment—will not deliberately utter a word or commit an action, which has the least tendency to injure the rights either of the one or the other. He will always be a humble and sincere adorer of God; zealous for his glory; a religious observer of his worship; full of gratitude for his benefits, of submission to his will, of faith in his promises, and of confidence in his mercy. While in his conduct to his fellow-men, he will evince justice and gentleness, forbearance and kindness; virtues the more real and true, because they spring from that pure and sincere love which attaches man to man by the united ties of sentiment and duty; and because, influenced by the maxims of the Gospel, he has learned how noble it is—how worthy of an intelligent being,

formed after the image of God, to reflect that image by copying one of the loveliest attributes of his nature.

The doctrine which I am endeavouring to explain, so clearly taught by our Lord, his Apostles inculcate in the most urgent manner. They unfold its various relations and tendencies; and it is impossible to employ terms more strong, figures more striking, or expressions more varied and eloquent, to enforce its necessity. What language can be clearer or more energetic than that of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, when he says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecies, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing; and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And why? because charity is the principle of all evangelical morality, or rather, because without it there can be no Christian virtue. This the Apostle of charity declares, with that warmth with which he is peculiarly animated, when he mentions a sentiment so dear to his heart and so essential to Christianity—"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness; but he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." These words are full of meaning, and they clearly demonstrate the truth which I am attempting to illustrate, since they intimate, that in the doctrine of Christ there exists an

inseparable connexion between brotherly love and the exercise of all the Christian graces; and that to extinguish this sentiment in our hearts, is to stifle every germ of virtue.

Let us now advert briefly to *the nature of that future happiness which is revealed in the Gospel*, and here also we shall find the influence of this principle no less conspicuously displayed. We have only to reflect on that which distinguishes man from other creatures—on that which constitutes his true excellence and grandeur as formed after the image of God—in order to be convinced, that one indispensable ingredient in the cup of perfect happiness, must be the perfection of his virtues. Into the happiness of heaven, nothing that is impure or unholy can gain admission. And since it has been shewn, that without charity there can be no virtue, it follows, that without this principle there can be no happiness. This is the view in which the Gospel represents it as one of the great sources of happiness in the life to come. "He that loveth not his brother," says the Apostle John, "abideth in death; but because we love the brethren, we know that we have passed from death unto life." This declaration is self-evident; for you need not to be told, that in the energetic style of inspiration, "death" signifies a state of sin and condemnation, and "life," a state of holiness and happiness.

The Apostle Paul confirms this truth, and makes it singularly applicable to our present subject. After having pronounced the beautiful eulogium on charity, of which I have already quoted a part; after having

fully established its pre-eminence, its empire over all the other graces—he concludes with decisive and unequivocal emphasis — Prophecies, says he, shall fail; tongues shall cease; the weak and imperfect knowledge of man shall pass away, but " charity never faileth." It *never* faileth. This sentiment which sprang from God—this sublime sentiment which gives energy to all our actions here below, as immortal as the source from which it flows, as incorruptible as the virtue which it inspires, shall survive the world itself, and extend its influence to the abodes of everlasting bliss. After having warmed, enlarged, ennobled our hearts on earth; after having fitted them, by the exercise of every virtue, for the enjoyment of celestial bliss; this vivifying principle will animate us in the life to come. There it will reign in purity, in brightness, in strength, in perfection; and re-uniting for ever the members of Christ's body, it will become the soul of the most endearing society and the most perfect happiness.

II. Jesus Christ was not like those pretended sages, so numerous in every age of the world, whose lives form a contrast with their systems, and whose example it is our duty to avoid with as much earnestness as we embrace their doctrines. He not only inculcated charity in his doctrines; he also exemplified it in his conduct: it shone in all his actions, as it breathed in all his words. And so admirable was the uniformity, so perfect the harmony, between the preacher and his doctrine, that to follow his precepts is to follow his example.

It is unnecessary, in illustrating this subject, to represent Jesus Christ in his exalted character of the Son of God—the Mediator between God and man—the Angel of the New Covenant. It is unnecessary to describe him descending on the wings of love from the abode of immortality and bliss, disrobing himself of that glory which he enjoyed in the bosom of the Father before the foundations of the world; to clothe himself in the infirmities of human nature—to be born in humiliation—to live in meanness and affliction, and to die in ignominy and agony. This mystery of love, which angels desire in vain to look into, baffles man's powers of description—surpasses man's powers of understanding. Let us therefore turn our eyes to a spectacle less dazzling—more nearly connected with ourselves—better adapted to our faculties; of which the scene is upon our earth, the course similar to our own—encompassed with the same difficulties—liable to the same vicissitudes, and exposed to the same temptations. Let us view Jesus Christ in his human character, as a citizen and a teacher, in the midst of men like ourselves, acting and instructing, rejected, persecuted, and outraged; and we shall be constrained to admire the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of that charity which nothing could overcome, and which displayed itself in every possible form of *beneficence*, of *zeal*, of *indulgence*, of *forgiveness*.

The Gospel paints the *beneficence* of Jesus in one word, sublime in its simplicity: "He went about continually doing good." Wherever he appeared, he scattered blessings around. He relieved the needy, he fed

the hungry, he consoled the afflicted; he gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, motion to the lame, health to the sick, life to the dead. Thus did he restore joy to the countenance of the disconsolate father, to the heart of the widowed mother, to the bosom of the family overwhelmed with tears and sorrow. These blessings he denied to the idle and profane curiosity of the great, and bestowed them on the wants, the tears, and the humble solicitations of the poor and unfortunate. All his miracles are manifestly impressed with the seal of goodness and commiseration—of the most ardent and affectionate charity.

To this feeling of benevolence which interested him so powerfully in the distresses of men, Jesus added the most ardent *zeal* for their true, their eternal interests; and his instructions are a living proof both of the truths which he taught, and of the manner in which he enforced them. Ever occupied in the great work, which his Father had given him to do, he lost no opportunity, he neglected no means, of advancing it. Full of zeal for the propagation of the truth, he carried its light whithersoever he went. Though the multitude fainted in their attendance, he gave himself no respite. The cities, the fields, the deserts, re-echoed the voice of his instructions. It was heard by the learned and the ignorant, by the great and the small, in public and in private, in the temple and in the house; at the table of the rich, and in the humble cottage of the poor; in the presence of those who envied, hated, and persecuted him, as well as in the bosom of confidence and friendship. His zeal overlooked not even sinners the

most abandoned. To reclaim them, he braved the contempt of the proud Pharisee, the censures of the unjust and suspicious public, the coarse sarcasms of the multitude, and the taunts of those very persons who were the objects of his exhortations. He became all things to all men, in order to gain their souls. This good Shepherd encountered every danger, and surmounted every obstacle, to bring back to the fold his wandering flock. A pure and noble zeal! unmixed with that vain-glory whose object is destruction, and the transmission to posterity of a name among the founders of sects. No: it was the zeal of truth—it was the glory of God—it was the love of men—the desire of conducting them to happiness, with which he was animated. It was this that dictated his instructions, and directed his exertions. Dignified with the great, profound with the learned, simple with the multitude, his language assumed all the forms adapted to his object, which was to render truth intelligible and acceptable. He aimed at something higher than the praises of men: he sought their salvation and happiness.

But while animated with so ardent a zeal for the welfare of men, Jesus forgot not to be *indulgent* to their infirmities. This branch of charity, so much neglected in the world, and yet so becoming in men who are ignorant, and weak, and wicked, and who, from the slightest knowledge of themselves, should learn how much they stand in need of that forbearance which they refuse to others; this branch of charity none ever possessed, none ever practised like the Son

of Man. Free from all sin, and himself requiring no indulgence; intimately acquainted also with the most secret sources of human actions; he was nevertheless indulgent to the infirmities of men, and unwilling to judge their actions. "Ye judge," he says to the Pharisees, "ye judge after the flesh," that is, according to your passions and prejudices: "as for me, I judge no man."

But of all the forms which Christ's love to man assumed, in none was it more conspicuously displayed than in the exercise of *forgiveness*. His ungrateful and barbarous countrymen, who were about to commit the most atrocious parricide on his person—this fanatical people, who loudly demanded the pardon of a murderer, and the death of the Son of God, could not, by these unexampled atrocities, extinguish the charity which animated his breast. At the prospect of the evils which were to befall their devoted city, he wept and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not!" And in another place, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children." Betrayed by his own disciple, who delivered him up to the hatred of the chief priests, and sold to them for silver the blood of his Master, what are the words he addresses to him when, by a perfidious kiss, he gave a sign to the officers who accompanied him? Compassion for the offender, rather than resentment for the offence, breathes in his address:

"Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas! betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" The same character is sustained in the midst of ignominy, and outrage, and torture. His strength forsook him—his tongue became stiff—his eyes grew dim—his spirit was ready to take its flight; but charity still glowed in his heart, and his last accents wafted to heaven the most ardent prayers for his murderers:—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This last expression of love, of which human language cannot portray the grandeur, completes the picture which I have attempted to sketch. Unworthy as it is of the Divine Original, it ought to convince us that charity was the animating principle of Christ's conduct, as it is a pervading principle in his doctrine; whence this incontrovertible consequence results, That without charity there can be no Christianity; while, on the other hand, by this shall all men know that we are the disciples of Jesus, if we have love one to another.

Be exhorted, my brethren, to apply these observations as an antidote against the infection of those unsocial principles which have recently been embraced, and which are openly avowed, by many religionists around you. To confirm in our hearts the sentiment of brotherly love, and to guard us against all exclusive and sectarian feelings, let us never forget that the Church of Christ is ONE—that it is not confined to any particular sect or community, but comprehends all believers of all denominations throughout the world. When professing Christians adopt different sentiments

from these, that holy bond of love, which should knit together the hearts of all who bear the name of Jesus, is unhappily broken asunder; and instead of universal charity, universal ill-will becomes the characteristic of sectarian religion. Let us therefore guard with jealousy against every principle that savours of bigotry. As we value our own title to the Christian name, let us regard sincere Christians of all denominations as our brethren—as disciples of the same Master—as members of that one Church of which Christ is the sole Head. Let this sentiment be firmly impressed on our minds, and then we shall disdain that littleness of soul which would lead us to think that the different modes of worship, or forms of Church government, which prevail among different Christian societies, should preclude the exercise of mutual good-will and brotherly love. Let us adhere steadfastly to what we believe to be the truth; but let us beware of judging harshly of those who differ from us respecting speculative matters on which Scripture is either altogether silent, or on which it has prescribed no definite and invariable rule.

A general uniformity in all speculative doctrines, modes of worship, and forms of Church government, we are not perhaps to expect in the Christian world. These are matters about which men of the wisest heads and the best hearts, have always differed; but, assuredly, they are matters about which no man, possessing a wise head and a good heart, would choose to *quarrel*. When neighbouring congregations of Christians, in their respective places of worship, offer up

" prayers and supplications with thanksgiving," to the same God, in the name of the same Mediator, and endeavour to learn the way to the same "New Jerusalem which is above,"—shall the one congregation look with aversion upon the other, merely because their opinions chance to differ on some point which, it is admitted, has no connexion with the doctrines of salvation? Can any thing be conceived more unreasonable, or more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity? Yet, unreasonable and unchristian as it is, we all know it to be too common in the present day; and much have they to answer for to the great Head of the Church, who are instrumental in exciting and keeping up this anti-christian spirit. Let us avoid such narrow and unsocial principles ourselves, and do all we can to discountenance them in others. If " our good be evil spoken of," let us manifest the spirit and imitate the example of our Divine Master, " who, when he was reviled, reviled not again;" but, for despiteful usage, returned the blessing of triumphant goodness. Let us never forget that charity is inseparable from Christianity; that Christ inculcates it in every page of his Gospel; that he exemplified it in every act of his life; and that his injunction to each of his followers is, " Go, and do thou likewise."

SERMON XIV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GROUNDS FOR GLORYING IN TRIBULATION.

BY THE

REV. ARCHIBALD STEWART,
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ROM. v. 3–5.

"*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.*"

The Apostle, as we may see from the context, mentions *glorying in tribulations* as one of the fruits or effects of a believer's justification. He who is justified by faith, is not only delivered from the fears of a guilty

conscience, and is at peace with God—not only is he enabled to rejoice in the hope of that glorious inheritance, which he has been assured awaits the faithful in the future state—but even in the afflictions of this present troubled and sorrowful life, he is enabled to glory.

Nor was it an empty boast on the part of the Apostle, to say of himself, and the other primitive believers—"we glory in tribulations." In saying so, he stated merely what is a well-authenticated fact; nor does he state it even in exaggerated terms. The sufferings of the early believers may well be styled "tribulations;" and the manner in which they comported themselves under them, may well be styled *glorying* in them.

Nor is it to be supposed, that to glory in tribulations was peculiar to the first professors of the Gospel: all true believers, fact and experience show, are enabled to do so in a degree greater or less, in proportion to the strength of their faith, and the brightness of their hope.

Now it must surely be admitted, that in this fact we have a very wonderful moral phenomenon presented to us—something, on merely natural principles, altogether unaccountable. To see a man rejoicing, *notwithstanding* his sufferings, in the good of his portion, were nothing remarkable; but his rejoicing and glorying even in the *very evil itself*, one would be disposed, in the ignorance of any other cause, to ascribe to mental derangement—one would be apt to suppose that the mind that could run to such extravagance, had broken loose from the laws by which human thought and feeling are ordinarily regulated. Had a heathen philosopher, ignorant of the

Gospel, heard the apostle assert, that he gloried in his sufferings and tribulations, he would doubtless have said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself."

And why, to a mind unenlightened and uninfluenced by the Gospel, to glory in tribulations must seem so unreasonable and unaccountable, is easily explained. Suffering, as viewed in the light of natural reason, can hardly be otherwise interpreted than as a testimony of the divine displeasure. In all their troubles and calamities, men, if they had any religious sentiments at all, could not fail to hear the voice of an angry Deity. Natural conscience, notwithstanding all men's attempts to silence and stifle it, lifts up its voice of protestation against sin, and pronounces its condemning sentence; and when distress and tribulation are sent upon them, in the dispensations of Providence, they cannot help hearing in these a voice that confirms the judgment which conscience has already uttered—they cannot help regarding them as a proof of God's anger; and seeing that the ills here endured, amount not to a full retribution, they are led farther to regard them as a presage of a day of worse visitation. This is really the interpretation which must be put upon the evils of life, when viewed in the light of natural reason. And it is manifest, that men generally did actually so interpret them; for it is to the strength of the feeling produced by their thus regarding them, that all their forms of false religion and superstition are to be ascribed. It is just because conscience led them to interpret the afflictions sent upon them as manifestations of God's anger, that, in order to avert his wrath, they made most costly sacrifices, and

added to their natural distresses a vast amount of self-inflicted sufferings. Some men of speculative minds, it is true, disbelieved and ridiculed the vulgar superstitions: but though they disbelieved the superstitions, did they themselves sit at ease and undisturbed, under the feeling in which the superstitions had their origin? Did they view the evils of life as coming from the hand of a presiding Deity, and yet look upon them with composure and indifference? Quite otherwise. While the vulgar sought to quiet *their* fears in their forms of superstition; *they* sought to quiet theirs, in their forms of false and sceptical philosophy—they made their philosophy serve the purpose of religion. For this end they reasoned themselves into the belief, that the events of a man's life are not of the ordering of the Divinity, but that things fall out by chance or blind necessity.—While some denied the existence of any regulating principle at all, making every thing result from mere contingency—others subjected gods and men alike to a principle called *fate*, which exercised over both an inexorable sway. The events of life being thus taken out of the hand of a presiding Deity, they of course saw no longer in their afflictions any testimony of Divine displeasure. They managed thus to extract out of them this bitterest ingredient; and this once done, they thought it the truest wisdom to rejoice in the good of their allotted portion, and to allow themselves to be as little as possible disconcerted by its evils. Some of them imagined that their philosophy might teach them *indifference* to the evils of life; but as for its teaching to glory in them, of that they never dreamed.

Thus we see, in both the religion and philosophy of heathenism, the light in which nature teaches a man to regard the evils of life: that while viewed as coming from the hand of God, they are really felt to be so intolerable, that men are constrained to betake themselves to some form of false religion or false philosophy, to quiet the conscience under that painful sense of the divine anger, and dread of divine retribution which they inspire—that so far from counting it joy to suffer affliction, it was the very business of their lives to find a remedy to do away with the mental distress and discomfort occasioned by it—and that even after all their efforts, the evils of life never changed their aspect, but continued to be *evils* still, which, since they could not escape from them, it behoved them to endure; but by no alchymy that they were acquainted with, could they convert their afflictions into blessings, in which it behoved them to rejoice.

Now, what is the light in which the Gospel teaches us to regard the evils of life? When the Apostle says, "we glory in tribulations," are we to understand that Divine Revelation has shewn that men's natural apprehensions are utterly groundless; and that the evils of life, in place of being regarded as indications of God's displeasure, are really to be looked upon by *all men* as tokens of his love and favour? Not so, we conceive, by any means. The Gospel shews how a man, by changing his relation to God, may change also the character of the evils of life which befall him, and so be enabled to view them as privileges in which he should glory, rather than as evils by which he should

be dismayed; but his relation to God being unchanged, the Gospel, so far from contradicting, fully confirms the sentiments which natural reason and conscience lead him to entertain regarding the afflictions with which he is visited in the providence of God. It teaches him to regard them as sent by God, as a sure intimation of His hatred of sin, and as a certain premonition of His determination fully to punish it, in the person of every one who continues impenitent. But then it may be thought, that as the Gospel has opened up a way of repentance, and shewed men a refuge from the wrath of God—those afflictions which are fitted and designed to arouse men out of their state of thoughtless security, and to set them in good earnest to seek a hiding-place from the storm of coming vengeance, are surely to be regarded, not as manifestations of displeasure, but of love and good-will on the part of God. It is doubtless true, that afflictions are to be regarded even by the impenitent as *a means of grace;* and such ones may be assured, that God is dealing with them much more graciously in making their days few and evil, than if he had made them many, and given them joy and gladness in them all; just because by the one mode of treatment, He has placed them under a stronger and more urgent motive to repentance, than would have been the case had He adopted the other. When we keep in view the fact, that God has set open a door of mercy, and invited men to enter it; we may see in those afflictions, which are designed as warnings to repentance, a proof of His goodness instead of an objection to it. But though it be the case, that the evils of

life are thus fitted to be profitable to the impenitent, by urging them to enter the now opened way of repentance; it is clear that they have this influence, not by being regarded by them as manifestations of God's love, but as intimations of his displeasure. Were we to tell the impenitent to regard his afflictions in no other light than as a proof of God's love and favour; we would by so doing be stripping them of all their beneficial influence, and rendering them of none effect as a motive of repentance. We state the case truly to such an one, when we say to him—by His afflictions sent upon you, God is putting you in mind that between Him and you there is still an unsettled controversy, and is admonishing you (though as yet He smites you more in mercy than in anger,) that this controversy left unsettled longer, will prove your ruin.

It is clear, then, that affliction, even when viewed in the light of the Gospel by the unconverted and unrepentant, though it may and ought to be looked upon by them as the doing of a God who still waits to be gracious, cannot, while their relation to God is unchanged, be regarded by them as so divested of its penal character, that they can at all glory in it. The best fruits it can as yet yield to them, is that sorrow which worketh repentance, and it is only when it operates thus that it operates aright.

There is, then, manifestly just one class of men, who, on just and reasonable grounds, can glory in their tribulations, and that is those who have already turned to God and found reconciliation—to them alone it is given to extract anything like the oil of gladness out

of the bitter herbs of temporal suffering; and so it is that we here find glorying in tribulations, ranked by the Apostle among the privileges of the justified. And it is worthy of being remarked too, that it is not the *first* in the enumeration—that first peace of conscience, and joyful hope of sharing the promised glory, must have resulted from justification, before a man can bring himself to regard his tribulations as a ground of rejoicing. He must not only be actually reconciled; but must have in some degree a *sense* of reconciliation, before he can see the character of his afflictions to be so changed, that in place of being depressed and disconcerted by them, as indications of the anger of his Law-giver and Judge, he can rejoice, and even glory in them as the gracious visitations of his reconciled Father.

Having made these remarks with a view to shew, who are they who alone can be expected to sympathize with the Apostle, when he says, "we glory in tribulations;" we would now call attention to the *grounds* of his so glorying, as here stated by him. By attending to these, we shall see, that the believer's glorying in his sufferings, in place of being irrational and extravagant, is really a manifestation of feeling, which, when the process of thought by which it is evolved is known, must be seen to be altogether in accordance with truth and soberness. The Apostle, as if aware that he had made a statement that must sound marvellous in the ears of human beings, subjoins the reasoning on which it is founded, detailing step by step the whole process by which joy may be extracted

by the believer out of suffering and tribulation—we glory in tribulations, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed."

Let us, then, endeavour to follow the Apostle along the steps of his argument, and we shall see clearly, that for a believer to glory in his sufferings, which God in wisdom lays upon him, there is really good and reasonable ground:—

First, "*Tribulation worketh patience.*" In order to explain the meaning, and to manifest the truth of this statement, we must first consider what this *patience* is, which it is said tribulation worketh. It may be generally defined to be *the bearing of suffering in the right and proper frame of mind.* It is when the spirit of a man, instead of being troubled and agitated above measure, and tempted through the influence of its excited passions to swerve from the path of duty, is kept composed and determined amidst the evils of life, by the consolations and supports of religion—that he can be truly said to possess the grace of Christian patience. It is when, in place of allowing his mind to be tossed and driven to and fro by the troubles of life, like a ship abandoned on a stormy sea, he keeps a firm control over it, and brings the high and holy principles of religion so to bear upon it, as to compose and restrain those feelings which, if unchecked, would overpower reason and conscience—that a man fulfils the Saviour's precept—"In your patience possess ye your souls." Patience does not imply a mind without feeling; but it implies a mind whose feelings are so regulated that

they cannot go into excess. A certain composedness and tranquillity of spirit beyond what would be the case were the mind abandoned to the impulses of mere emotion, and a certain fixedness of purpose, which could not be manifested, were it not that a ruling principle still holds and asserts its sovereignty amidst the tumult of excited passions, are manifest characteristics of the grace of patience. But *that patience*, which is a *Christian* grace, is not mere mental composure in the midst of outward troubles, and fixedness of purpose when excited passion threatens to bear the spirit away from its firmest resolves; but it is all this *from right religious views and principles*. It is because the mind of a Christian is stayed upon God, that it is kept calm and steady in the day of trouble and calamity. He has such confidence in the character of God, and has taken such a hold upon his promises, and understands, moreover, so well the end and design of His fatherly correction, that when affliction does come, instead of loosening his hold of God, it tends, on the contrary, to lead him to cleave to Him still more closely. Thus it was with Job, that notable example of patience. His language under his severest trials was—"though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Now it is just when tribulation operates thus, that it worketh patience—when, in place of breaking a man away from his hold of God, and setting him adrift on a sea of troubles, it leads him, on the ground of God's gracious promises, to cleave to Him in firmer reliance, and makes him more resolute than ever, to seek to be in all things more submissive and obedient to the Divine will.

But some may object:—what assurance have we that tribulation shall operate thus—instead of working patience, may it not work in the opposite way; yea, is it not more likely to operate thus in the great majority of cases? We must keep in mind who are the persons of whom the Apostle makes this affirmation: they are, as we have seen, true believers—men whose faith has been effectual, not only for their justification, but also for producing in them peace, and joy, and hope. Now though it may not, and indeed cannot be true of *others*, that their tribulations will work patience, (for there cannot be Christian patience where there is not Christian faith;) the statement of the Apostle will hold *generally* true of those regarding whom he makes it. As God designs the tribulations of believers to work in them patience, and for this end measures out their trials in proportion to their strength, laying not more on any of them than they are able to bear, it may be affirmed generally of *them*, that their tribulation works in them patience. And this is enough for the Apostle's argument. He states what is the invariable *tendency* of affliction in reference to believers, and what is actually its general result.

It being granted, then, that tribulation worketh patience, what ground, it may be asked, has a man for rejoicing in tribulation because it so operates? Is there enough in the virtue of patience to compensate a man for his sufferings, and to leave over and above a balance in his favour? Does the seed which he has sown in tears yield him manifestly such a plenteous return, that he can rejoice when he reaps it? Though

it is not because it yields patience merely, but other fruit besides, that the Apostle gloried in tribulations; yet even in the mere exercise of patience, there is implied what ought to be accounted by the believer a very ample recompense for all his sufferings. The Christian is taught to regard the improvement of character—the having his mind and will brought into perfect conformity to the mind and will of God—as that above all things else to be desired and sought by him. Any advance he can make in this way, he looks upon as the greatest gain, not only on account of its present advantage, but especially because of its eternal recompense. Shew him, then, that he has gained in character—that he has brought his will more nearly to coincide with the will of God, and he will be satisfied that he has cause to rejoice in the acquisition, whatever may have been the sacrifice or suffering through which it was obtained. Now, how are such acquisitions made? In what way is a man taught to seek and expect improvement in character? *First*, we answer, by endeavouring, in the strength of Divine grace sought and relied on, *to do* the will of God, as made known in His holy commandments: and *secondly*, by endeavouring, through the same Divine aid, *patiently to submit* to God's will, as made known in His providential dispensations. He must be taught obedience, not only by the things which he *does*, but also by the things which he *suffers*. God combines both modes of discipline, because both are needed to form and perfect the character. Now, it is clear that a believer is taught obedience by suffering, *only when he patiently*

endures his afflictions. If affliction be not endured in the right and proper spirit, it cannot have any beneficial influence; but if, on the other hand, it be *patiently* borne—borne as a Christian should bear it; then it will produce not the grace of patience merely, but will strengthen all the graces of the inner man, and give vigour and solidity to the entire character. So it is manifest, that when tribulation worketh patience, it must necessarily extend its beneficial influence over the whole spiritual man, giving him increase in every part. That patience will operate so, is to be inferred from its very nature; and that such is *actually* its operation, is plainly stated by the Apostle James, when he says—"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work, *that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*"—(i. 2–4.) from which it is as clear as language can make it, that the perfect exercise of the grace of patience, implies the perfection of the *whole man*, in all Christian attainments. Knowing, then, that the patient endurance of affliction thus tends greatly to his present growth in grace, and so works out for him a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory; good cause surely has the believer on this ground alone, even had he no other, to rejoice in his tribulations.

Secondly, But the patient enduring of tribulation, not only tends to the *improvement* of character, but it also serves to *test* the character, and so to manifest its genuineness. And this is the meaning of the Apostle

when he says, that patience worketh experience. The original term* here rendered, "experience" is used to denote the *proof* to which certain articles (metals or arms, *e. g.*) whose genuineness or good quality cannot be known by mere inspection, are subjected, with a view to ascertain if they be really what they seem to be; and it denotes not only the *act of proving*, but it is used too to signify *the favourable judgment passed upon the article when it stands the proof.* The latter seems to be the sense of the term in the passage before us, which might accordingly be rendered—"patience (worketh) approval," *i. e.* the patient enduring of tribulations, enables a man, on sure and undoubted evidence, to pass a favourable judgment on his religious state and character. The truth of the Apostle's affirmation, as thus explained, must be very manifest. When a man is put into the furnace of affliction, and comes out unscathed—when his religious principles in place of being consumed like stubble, stand the fiery trial; and not only stand it, but are all the more strengthened and confirmed by it; then he has the best evidence to conclude that they are true and genuine. When he is in circumstances of ease and tranquillity, he may, indeed, in compliance with Scripture precept, give all diligence in the way of active obedience to obtain decisive evidence of his spiritual state—he may cultivate assiduously the graces of the Gospel, till they attain a size and development that is distinctly observable by his reflex sense; but then the doubt will naturally

* Δοκιμη.

arise, *may they not after all be spurious?* so he feels altogether in the condition of one who is marching to the battle-field, equipped in armour that has never been proved, and concerning which he has room to doubt how it may serve him in the hour of conflict. In short, the evidence of his spiritual condition, which a man obtains by mere active obedience in a season of unruffled tranquillity, always comes slowly, and perhaps never comes surely—a doubt always rests upon it; whereas if he be subjected to tribulation, and if he endure the trial, the evidence which was before doubtful, and which might have long continued so, at once stands forth clear and convincing. So it was with the early disciples. They seem to have had no more doubt of their own spiritual condition, than they had of the fact of their Lord's resurrection; and it was doubtless from their patient endurance of their tribulations, that they were enabled to pass upon themselves so decided a judgment of approval. Their tribulations were, indeed, of a kind that was fitted *directly* to test their religious principles; but in his comportment under afflictions of *whatever kind*, the believer may find at once the surest and the shortest way of arriving at a true judgment regarding his religious character.

Thirdly, The value, to the believer, of this judgment of self-approval, will fully appear when we consider, that it *worketh hope*—even a hope that maketh not ashamed. The connection between a believer's judgment of self-approval, and his hope of glory, is very evident. The fact of his being a believer implies, that he has faith in the unseen realities of the future world—that

he really and assuredly believes that there is in heaven an inconceivably glorious inheritance in reserve for the people of God. He may believe this, however, without having any assured hope of being himself a partaker of the inheritance. He knows that it is promised to men, not absolutely, but *conditionally*—that it is promised to men of a certain character only; so it is clearly only when he has been enabled to pronounce judgment on himself *favourably* and *decidedly*, that his hope of future glory will be brightened up into full assurance. We do not mean to say, that Christian hope is attainable only by a man's looking inwardly upon himself, and being enabled to pass a favourable judgment upon his own character. It may be attained, in *some measure*, in the act of simple reliance upon the Saviour for the promised blessings of salvation. In the direct exercise of faith, without the reflex act of self-inspection, a man may have some measure of both peace and hope imparted to him. But the hope which is thus produced is faint and flickering, until it be strengthened by the evidence of sensible experience—until he sees, by looking inwardly upon himself, that the faith of the Gospel has produced in him the *character* of the Gospel, and until moreover he has had this character *tested* in such a way as makes it manifest that it is no counterfeit: it is not till then, that he can look upon himself as indeed an heir of the blessed inheritance, and can rejoice in the assured hope of its eternal enjoyment. Thus it is that self-approval worketh hope—the hope which maketh not ashamed—which shall never deceive nor disappoint him that cherishes it.

And surely *such* a hope, it must be allowed by every one who knows any thing of its value, will far more than compensate a man for all his troubles and sorrows; and much more cause has he to glory in tribulations than to grieve under them, when he regards them as God's appointed means of conveying to him so rich a blessing. He need not mourn though this earth be made darkness and desolation around him, who has the hope of heaven's glory to cheer him; and if it be in the dark night of sorrow that the light of heavenly hope is made to shine most brightly, he need not be impatient for the coming of the dawn. Of all God's gifts to men on earth, the assured hope of heavenly glory is the richest and the rarest; and though it be obtained, like the inheritance of which it is a foretaste, through much tribulation, it is still to be regarded as cheaply purchased. Our Lord promised to recompense his disciples, even in this life, an *hundred-fold*, for whatever sacrifice they should make for his sake and the Gospel's. And how did he fulfil this promise? Not by enriching them with temporal blessings; for their life to its close was one of privation and suffering. But still the Saviour's promise was fulfilled—their hundredfold compensation was doubtless given to them. The blessed hope that grew out of their very sufferings, *that* was their compensation; and from our Lord's language we may learn to estimate its worth. So though to outward observation they seemed of all men the most miserable, yet this was all made up to them an hundredfold in spiritual joy and consolation. The hope of salvation was given to them in such measure, that

though they seemed to have no other inheritance in this life except unmingled and unmitigated tribulation, their's was, in fact, the most blessed portion of any that God here allows to men—they were anointed with the oil of gladness above all their fellows. And as it was with them, so is it with every true disciple. Afflictions not merely *suffered* but *endured*, will always yield to him the same blessed fruit. "Behold," says an Apostle, "we count them happy that endure," (James v. 11;) and knowing the process by which that blessed hope, which is the brightest as well as purest ray of any that sheds its light and gladness upon the soul of man, is made to shine, we can have no difficulty in perceiving the *reason* as well as truth of the Apostle's estimate. It is true that they are happy who endure affliction, just because affliction cannot be endured without brightening up in the soul of the believer that hope of glory, which is enough of itself to fill the heart with joy unspeakable.

The Apostle, to give confirmation to his argument, and to shew that the process by which this gladdening hope is extracted out of the believer's tribulations, is not one that is carried on independently of the aid of Divine grace, adds, "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." The divine Spirit, by infusing love towards God into the believer's heart, and inspiring him with all filial affections, gives him assured grounds to regard himself a child of God—one whom God regards with the love of a father; and being assured of this, and knowing that on this point there is no delusion or self-deception,

then he knows for certain that his hopes can never be disappointed—that be they ever so bright, they shall be far more than realized.

The practical lessons, Brethren, which this subject is fitted to teach, are so plain and obvious, that they must at once occur to your own reflection. It shews us who they are who alone can glory in tribulation, and extract joy and gladness out of sorrow and distress. And this surely should admonish every man, in his season of tranquillity, to make preparation against a day of trouble, by seeking to gain entrance into that state of acceptance with God, in which, though troubles do assail him, they cannot greatly distress, much less destroy him, but shall all be made to brighten his hope now, and to augment his glory hereafter. Let no man think that it is time enough to seek after God, when the day of trouble comes. If that be *then* to be done, there will be no glorying in tribulation. It will yield nothing but the bitter fruit of sorrow. In anticipation of the evil day, it were surely well for men to acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace with Him, so that when it comes they may be enabled, in confidence, to flee to Him as their refuge and very present help.

The subject before us, while it thus admonishes all men to seek preparation against the evil day, speaks comfort to the believer who is enduring affliction. It shews him the blessed results of affliction, if it be endured with the patience of a Christian, and assures him that light shall arise to him out of darkness and joy out of sorrow, if he only hold fast his confidence

in God; that if he endure the trial, and allow patience to have her perfect work, he will come forth out of all his tribulations not only a better but a happier man, more blessed in the end than he was in the beginning; and so, even when he looks back upon the darkest passage of his history, will have cause, with unfeigned thankfulness to own, "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

SERMON XV.

ON THE IMPORTANCE AND CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPEL SCHEME OF SALVATION.

BY

ALEXANDER CRAIK, D.D.,

MINISTER OF LIBERTON.

1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

"*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*"

The importance and credibility of the Gospel scheme of salvation, may be proved from the two following facts, viz., the justice and holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. The purity and rectitude of the divine nature requiring absolute, unlimited obedience

from every rational creature, to his righteous will, and the sinfulness of man totally incapacitating him for the performance of this reasonable service, it follows that all mankind must either expect the just recompence of their transgression, to be excluded from the divine favour, and rendered obnoxious to his wrath and curse, or owe their salvation to some mediator between God and man, able and willing to do away the penal consequences of iniquity, without destroying the offender.

Hence, it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; on these two leading principles, the remedy proposed in the Gospel grounds its claims to our most cordial reception and regard, and before men reject it, they would do well to consider the dreadful consequences which they bring upon themselves, by persisting in unbelief.

It shall, therefore, be the business of the following discourse, by directing your attention, for a little, to these great and fundamental truths, the justice and holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man, to shew from thence the reasonableness and necessity of the Gospel method of salvation, or, in the words of the Apostle, that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This enquiry will, with the blessing of God, it is hoped, suggest fit matter for your contemplation, in your present circumstances, when you have the near prospect of sitting down at the Lord's Table, which was intended to commemorate your wonderful re-

covery, by the meritorious death of Christ, from the sad consequences of the fall. Before you can worthily partake of that sacred solemnity, you must feel your need of a Saviour. You must be duly sensible of your lost and undone condition by nature, of the inveterate malignity of your disease, before you can justly appreciate the value of the remedy which the divine mercy has provided, before you can flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel.

1*st*, Then, we shall consider, for a little, the justice and holiness of God.

Both reason and Scripture concur in representing God, as a being of the most inflexible justice and spotless purity. Under whichsoever of these just and awful views we contemplate the Almighty, we cannot conceive him to behold evil, but with the most perfect hatred; or to exist, without being a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity.

You know it is the very nature of justice to render unto every one their just desert; to them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. And we could as soon conceive of the righteous Governor of heaven and earth failing to protect the innocent, and reward the well-deserving, as remiss in punishing the bad.

Even in human governments, unreasonable indulgence to the lawless and disobedient would be injustice

and cruelty to the peaceable and well-disposed; and without examples of wholesome severity, licentiousness and wild disorder would fill the world with crimes and miseries.

Nothing can be clearer, than that, in every well-regulated society, the disturbers of the public peace must be sacrificed to the good of the whole; and this, far from being considered harsh or oppressive, forms the very essence and office of justice.

If such be the necessity of punishing the lawless, even on the part of human legislators, who are men of like passions with those over whom they exercise dominion, how much more will it hold with regard to that great Legislator, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, or the workers thereof, without detestation and abhorrence; whose law is reason, whose will is perfect rectitude, on the strict observance of which depends the well-being of ten thousand worlds.

The Almighty must be considered, if we wish to think of him aright, as the righteous Governor of all rational creatures, who hath appointed laws for the regulation of their conduct, in obedience to which consist the dignity and happiness of each individual, no less than of the whole vast family in heaven and earth, and by the transgression of which, they violate the law of their nature, destroy their own peace, and introduce disorder and misery into the works of God. Holiness, the most comprehensive term by which we can express that universal obedience to the divine will, wherein are placed the perfection and happiness of

God's rational creation, is the great law of the universe, to which it owes its beauty, order, and felicity, and even its very being. This is the common bond of union, which links in love and concord, all the various orders of intelligences throughout the immensity of space, and without which, existence, instead of being a blessing, would be a curse more bitter than death. For, banish virtue from the world, and what could we suppose it to be, but the habitation of devils; the abode of wickedness and horrid cruelty, than which even hell itself could hardly be conceived more dismal? By vice, or wickedness, on the other hand, is meant the transgression of this law, which binds all holy beings together in mutual friendship, and consequently the alienation, the ruin, and debasement of God's noblest works, his intelligent offspring.

Whoever, then, violates the divine law, in its own nature so holy, just, and good, and in its influence, so beneficial and necessary to the welfare of every creature, basely tramples upon, and does despite to the authority of that great and good Being, in whom he lives and moves—renounces his allegiance to his rightful Sovereign—becomes a rebel and a traitor to the sacred Majesty of heaven—ungratefully employs those powers, which were bestowed for the noblest purposes, against that gracious power from whom they were derived, and does all that he can do, to extend confusion and misery, and every kind of mischief, over the universe of God.

Thus, you see, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from the living God, how base and shocking, in

its ill desert, and how fatal and destructive in the consequences with which it is inseparably attended. Truly sin is the reproach and ruin of any people, and the more exalted in the scale of being that creature is, who doth commit it, the more completely odious and hurtful he doth become, and consequently the more obnoxious to righteous punishment.

In as far, then, as God is zealous for the honour of his laws, and the good order and peace of his whole rational creation, which depend upon their strict observance, in so far must we consider him bound to punish every transgression of these laws in the most exemplary and awful manner. As the divine law is perfect righteousness, every deviation therefrom must be iniquity. But we cannot suppose any one instance of iniquity to be connived at, or passed over with impunity, more than any other.

For the same authority which said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, hath said also, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all. That is to say, every single breach of the law of God argues equal contempt for the divine will, equal opposition to the divine authority with any other, and therefore the same regard to justice, which requires the punishment of sin in any one instance, requires it in all.

In like manner, to a Being of spotless purity, all manner of evil must be completely odious and abominable. Iniquity, in all the specious forms it may assume, is enmity against God. However disguised or softened from its original deformity, it must be as offen-

sive to his nature, and opposite to his character, as sweet is to bitter, or darkness is to light.

As sure, therefore, as God is just and holy, we cannot suppose him to suffer any, even the smallest deviation from rectitude, under his righteous government, to pass unpunished; and with this natural sense of the ill-desert of sin, accord the awful declarations denounced in Scripture.

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them. Hast thou not heard this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Though his excellency mount up to heaven, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall utterly perish, and the place thereof shall know him no more for ever.

God cannot behold evil but with the most perfect hatred and abhorrence, and though hand should join in hand, iniquity and the workers thereof shall not pass unpunished. Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Our God is a consuming fire. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? If he looketh on the earth, it trembleth. If he touch the hills, they smoke. The angels, who kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day, and on the wicked God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup.

2dly, Now, that all the human race are sinners, that we have all come short of the glory of God, and, in instances innumerable, done those things which we ought not to have done, and left undone those things which we ought to have done, is a fact of such unquestionable truth—a matter of such woeful and daily experience, that I believe no reasonable man was ever disposed to dispute it.

Does not reason, in this respect, loudly reiterate the voice of revelation, that it is our bounden duty, as well as our highest interest, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves? What more just and reasonable than that he, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, to whose unmerited bounty we owe the food we eat, the raiment we put on, the air we breathe, all that we now possess, or hope to obtain, in time and through eternity, should hold the supreme place in our affections, and call forth every power and faculty within us, in cheerful subservience to his will?

Ought we not to value the approbation of that great Being, in whom we live and move, and who giveth us all things richly to enjoy, as of more importance to us than all the universe beside? Ought we not to dread that divine displeasure, which, in a moment, could reduce us to the dust, or render us completely miserable for ever, as the greatest curse that could befall us; or shall we be afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more, that they can do, and fear not to

offend him, who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast both body and soul into hell?

Are we not, therefore, called upon by every tie of gratitude and ingenuousness, and constrained by every motive of duty and of interest, which can influence the conduct of reasonable creatures, to devote all our time and talents, our diligence and application, to the service of God, to make his holy will the constant rule of our conduct, and the promotion of his glory the main business and study of our lives?

Can any thing in heaven or earth deserve one anxious thought or wish, the regard of a single moment from any rational creature, in preference to the God of his life, and the length of his days, the bountiful supply of all his present comforts, the source supreme of all his future hopes? Or rather, must not all the universe beside, comparatively speaking, seem vile and insignificant? For what would it profit a man, though he should gain ten thousand worlds, and lose his own soul, or be at variance with him, at whose rebuke the sun shall become black as sackcloth, and the moon as blood; the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, shall say unto the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of Him, that sitteth upon the throne?

Yet can any fact be more deplorably, and manifestly certain, than that these great and momentous truths, in which we are all so nearly concerned, seldom or

ever make any suitable impression on our hearts, so as to influence us to forego one guilty pleasure, to mortify one sensual, inordinate desire, or control one selfish, or angry passion? How habitually do we live, and act, as if these awful realities never once occurred to us, and the objects of a present world were our whole concern?

Or, if God and an eternal world should sometimes break in upon our giddy schemes, how apt are we to treat them as troublesome intruders, unfriendly to our repose, and to dismiss them, as Felix did Paul, when he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and a judgment to come. Go thy way for this time, I will hear thee, at a more convenient season. Instead of glorifying the great Author of our being, in our bodies and in our spirits which are his, have we not sought our own glory, more than the glory of Him that sent us, and trusted in uncertain riches more than in the living God?

Have we not made the gold our hope, and said unto the fine gold, thou art our confidence, and forgotten the Lord our maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth? Wandering on the mountains of a thousand vanities, how seldom, alas! is God in all our thoughts? and though his constant visitation upholds our souls in being, have not the creatures of his power sometimes dared, with a presumption of impiety unspeakable, to insult the Almighty to his face, and challenge him to do his worst, by denying his existence, and pouring contempt upon his sacred name?

In relation to our fellow-creatures, could equity itself have devised a law more just and reasonable, more plain and practical; and, at the same time, more important and comprehensive, than the golden rule prescribed by our Saviour, of doing unto others, as we would wish them to do unto us?

Yet even from this plain path of uprightness, in which a way-faring man, though a fool, could scarcely be conceived to err, how often have we turned aside to the hidden ways of dishonesty, and from our corrupt hearts, which ought to glow with love, tenderness, and fellow-feeling towards all mankind, have proceeded evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. Truly the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? we are dead in trespasses and sins; when we would do good, evil is present with us; and there is a law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the power of sin.

3*dly*, How, then, shall guilty and polluted man, who has drunk up iniquity, as the thirsty ox drinketh up water, appear before a thrice just and holy God? Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? Shall we come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall we give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?

No; all the costly and bloody sacrifices which superstition ever prescribed, are completely ineffectual to atone for the violation of God's broken law, or quiet the alarming suggestions of a conscience oppressed with guilt.

It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. An infinitely pure and holy being can accept of nothing at our hands in place of universal righteousness, as we have already shewn, He could not dispense with a single violation of his righteous will, without winking at vice, and thus so far becoming the patron of iniquity, a notion altogether contrary to the nature of God, and inconsistent with his character. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the divine law, till all be fulfilled; and we may as soon cease to consider God to be what he is, a being of spotless purity, possessed of every possible perfection, as flatter ourselves that any act of disobedience to his righteous government can escape his just indignation; and who, O Lord Almighty, knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath; and, be assured, it is a fearful thing, beyond imagination, to fall into the hands of the living God.

Seeing, then, it is absolutely impossible for an infinitely just God to pass over any breach of his laws, without exacting ample satisfaction, and as impossible for a being of perfect purity to behold any species of evil,

but with the most perfect hatred and abhorrence, what, alas! shall become of guilty sinners, whose iniquities are more than can be numbered? By nature we are under sentence of condemnation, and have nothing to expect from our own desert, but a certain fearful looking for of wrath, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of God and righteouness.

Indeed, our own sad experience, and that of all ages but too evidently shew, that this dreadful sentence is already begun to take effect against us. Man, alas! is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. From the first moment of his existence to his dying hour, he is doomed to be the heir of numberless diseases and miseries, from which no human power or policy can exempt him. At best, few and evil are the days of the years of his pilgrimage in this vale of tears; all human pleasures and pursuits end in vanity and vexation of spirit. Even the whole creation groaneth and travelleth in pain, under the bondage of corruption, and the tyranny of death. Cursed is the ground for the sake of man. Distress and desolation seem to lord it with undistinguishing severity over this once fair portion of the universe of God. To complete the dismal overthrow introduced by sin, nature sees all her children go down to the grave, without the power to rescue them from the jaws of destruction, without the hope of ever again delivering them from the dreadful dominion of the king of terrors. And, unless God, in boundless mercy to the human race, hath provided some method beyond the reach of reason, by which he may be just, and the justifier of penitent offenders; whereby sin may

be punished, and the sinner saved, the whole world, as sure as it lieth in wickedness, must perish everlastingly.

How, then, shall wretched mortals be delivered from this body of sin and death, or escape the awful curse denounced against every transgressor of God's holy law? On our natural notions of the divine goodness, we cannot reasonably rely for favour or forgiveness. For the same reason, which tells us that God is infinitely gracious, assures us also that He is infinitely just and holy, and that, as sure as he is the invariable friend and patron of righteousness, he must also be the eternal enemy, and avenger of guilt.

Now, it is not possible that the perfections of Deity can be at variance with one another. If it be just in God to punish the guilty, it must likewise be consistent with his goodness and compassion; whereas indulgence to their vices could have no other effect than to encourage wickedness, to the great detriment of the peaceable and well-disposed, and would, therefore, be both cruel and unjust. Instead of having any reason, then, to flatter ourselves with the hope of forgiveness, from the inherent benignity of the Supreme Being, you see that all his perfections, his goodness, no less than his justice and purity, are equally concerned in punishing vice.

Wherefore, unless God himself, in a way of which, from reason, we can form no conception, hath provided some remedy or antidote of sufficient efficacy to remove the penal consequences of iniquity; some satisfaction or atonement, by which the honour of the divine law may

be vindicated in the punishment of guilt, and yet the guilty saved, it is clear we are still in our sins, and have nothing to look for, but utter destruction. For reason, as well as Scripture, assure us that the wages of sin are death.

Consider well, then, to what a dreadful dilemma we are reduced by sin. If we take the pains to reflect at all upon our own condition, and if we don't, our guilt and danger are still the more extreme, we must either abandon ourselves to despair, and give ourselves up for lost, or turn to some stronghold as prisoners of hope.

But what hope is it possible for those, who are penetrated with a due sense of the ill-desert of sin, to lay hold of, but that which is set before us in the Gospel? To God, as he is in himself, we cannot flee for salvation. For God, according to every view which reason leads us to form of him, is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity. Unless, then, there be some mediator between God and man, able and willing to save us—some sacrifice or sin sufficiently meritorious to bear our transgressions; and, by suffering in our stead, to satisfy divine justice, the natural consequences of iniquity must fall upon our own heads, and prove our eternal ruin. Thus, you see, their is no alternative between believing in some satisfaction, or atonement being made for the sins of mankind, and abandoning ourselves to utter despair, to irremediable destruction.

The doctrine of an atonement, then, instead of being a gloomy, uncomfortable doctrine, repugnant to reason, as some have pretended, is the only sure ground of conso-

lation to which a mind, oppressed with guilt, can flee for refuge, and so congenial to the best convictions of enlightened reason, so indispensably necessary to the situation and circumstances of mankind, that a religion destitute of this fundamental and important truth, could not be the religion of sinners.

What reason, therefore, have we to adore the unsearchable riches of the grace of God, who hath set forth his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but for the sins of the whole world? When there was no eye to pity, nor hand to help us—when the redemption of the soul was so precious, that it must have ceased for ever, and no created being in earth or heaven could be found worthy to undertake the arduous work of our salvation, God was pleased to say, deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom, and laid our help upon one mighty to save.

For this purpose did he send his only-begotten Son into the world, not to condemn the world, as our guilty fears might have suggested, but that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. He, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, was graciously pleased, for our sakes, to become poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.

Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet, for our sakes, he made himself of no reputation, submitted to lead a life of unexampled scorn and persecution; and, at last,

freely gave himself up to the death for us all, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

By bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and giving himself up to God, a sacrifice and an offering of a sweet smelling savour, He blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that were against us, nailing them unto his cross. By suffering for sin, the just for the unjust, he magnified the law, and made it honourable, he fulfilled all righteousness, and rendered it consistent with the divine perfections, to extend, even to the guilty, those gracious effects of the divine favour and complacency, which belong only to the good.

The avenging sword of justice being sheathed in his precious blood, the honour of the divine law was thereby completely vindicated, and the miserable consequences of iniquity fully demonstrated to the whole creation. Having become sin, or a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ—having borne our griefs, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us, he hath finished transgression and made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. Henceforth, then, there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Those who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in their minds, by wicked works, having no hope, and without God in the world, are made nigh by the blood

of Christ. Now, therefore, they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. They are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They are begotten again unto a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for all who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation; and when Christ, who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory.

Such are the sublime discoveries revealed in the Gospel, for the comfort and eternal consolation of perishing sinners. But, in the 4*th* place, recollect it can only be to those who cordially embrace them, that these glad tidings of great joy, these precious and reviving truths can be of any advantage. Christ is only become the author of eternal salvation to them who obey him, and before we can flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel, we must believe that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost, all that come to God through him.

If, then, we do not freely embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the Gospel—if we rest not in him alone for salvation, and account him the only way, and the truth, and the life, without whom it is impossible to please God, we are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

He is the only Mediator between God and man. He alone is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and there is no other name given under heaven, or among men,

whereby a sinner can be saved, but the name Christ Jesus.

For such, therefore, as neglect or despise this great salvation—this last best gift of heaven to the human race, and account the blood of the covenant, wherewith they have been sanctified, an unholy thing, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; the wrath of God abideth upon them; and the very greatness of the gift which they have so obstinately rejected, by enhancing their guilt, must aggravate their condemnation.

To those to whom the remedy proposed in the Gospel doth not become the savour of life unto life, it must prove the savour of death unto death; and this is the condemnation, the most awful which it is possible for human wickedness to bring upon itself, that light hath come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil.

With such alarming considerations, on the one hand, and such glorious prospects on the other, can we hesitate for a moment what line of conduct we are determined to pursue?

Would the wretch, just ready to perish, refuse to grasp at the smallest hope of salvation, held out for his relief, merely because he was not acquainted with every circumstance of the way in which it had come within his reach, or the manner in which it might contribute to his complete deliverance?

Would a criminal, under sentence of death, reject the offers of pardon, life, and liberty, because his gracious sovereign did not think proper to explain to him

all the reasons for which he had been pleased to grant him this inestimable favour?

And shall we, who are under the condemning power of sin, who stand on the brink of a precipice of a bottomless abyss of misery, just ready to overwhelm our guilty souls in irremediable destruction, refuse to lay hold of the helping hand stretched out for our relief, because, measuring the ways of providence by our own selfish and contracted views, we may be unable to comprehend the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of that love of God in Christ, which passeth knowledge?

Shall we impiously reject the counsel of God against ourselves, because his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts, and rather resign ourselves to all the miseries and woes of hell, than accept of a remedy which represents the Deity in his true character, as at once the most awful and most amiable being whom we can contemplate, merely because we know only but in part, and are not yet acquainted with all the reasons of the divine procedure, relating to this stupendous scheme.

Shall short-sighted, ignorant creatures, like man, who are but of yesterday, and know nothing, take it upon them to penetrate into all the mysteries of providence, or presume to fathom, by their shallow powers, the deep things of God?

Even in the most common operations of the divine procedure, how unsearchable are his counsels, and his ways past finding out? and shall we, then, in the very

infancy of our being, expect to comprehend, or dare to demand, an explanation of all the reasons of his providence, in the most extraordinary and wonderful of all his works, the redemption of a lost world from sin and hell?

Surely God himself must be allowed to be the only competent judge what kind of remedy or satisfaction he could admit for the sins of men; and it becomes us, far from presuming to form any rash, unwarrantable opinion of our own, on a subject by its nature so infinitely beyond the reach of our faculties, to receive whatever method of recovery providence hath been pleased to propose to our acceptance with the most implicit reverence and cordial gratitude.

Situated as we are, all that it imports us to know, or becomes us to enquire after is, whether God hath really revealed to us any prospect of deliverance from the dismal circumstances in which, if we reflect at all upon our own condition, we must feel ourselves to be involved by sin.

If no intimation of a remedy hath been offered us, we know our condition is absolutely hopeless and deplorable, and we have nothing to expect, but that the fatal consequences of iniquity will fall upon our own heads, and utterly consume us. Now, surely, since even the most faint and distant hopes of relief are incomparably preferable to this state of absolute despair, far from rejecting them, because they may not be so strong as we could wish, would we not be compelled, on the contrary, by every principle within us, to cherish them with all

our ardour, and esteem them the most precious treasure we could possess?

Thus, even though the hopes afforded by the Gospel were but uncertain and obscure, it would be our most indispensable duty, and our highest interest to receive them with all holy confidence and gratitude, and deem them the most important and joyful tidings we ever heard. But, blessed be God, he hath not left us in this state of doubt and uncertainty, with regard to our eternal interest; but hath graciously afforded us every kind of evidence and satisfaction on this interesting subject, which reasonable creatures could desire. For this purpose hath he sent his own Son into the world, to seek and to save that which was lost; and, in order to convince us of his ability to accomplish this great work, exhibited in Jesus such astonishing displays of the divine goodness and omnipotence, as demonstrated him to be the Son of God with power.

The works which he did, the same bare witness of him, that the Father sent him. By him not only the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, the lepers were cleansed, and devils dispossessed; the most obstinate and incurable distempers, that could afflict the human frame, were remedied without delay, and the winds and seas manifested to acknowledge his supremacy, but even the dead, in their graves, hearing the voice of the Son of God, came forth.

Thou, alone, O great Captain of our salvation, didst burst the bands of death asunder, triumph over princi-

palities and powers, and open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. By rising victorious from the tomb, thou hast become the first fruits of them that slept —brought life and immortality to light, and enabled thy faithful followers, even in the gloom of death, to exclaim with triumph, O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?

Thou art the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in thee, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in thee, shall not die for ever. Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee, thou only hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Shall not we then account it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation; nay, even the most important we ever heard, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? Ought not our souls to magnify the Lord, and all that is within us be stirred up to bless his holy and gracious name, who at an expense of love unparalleled, hath forgiven all our iniquites, hath healed all our diseases, redeemed our lives from destruction, and crowned us with loving-kindness and tender mercy?

God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ; and, though the preaching of the cross be unto them that perish foolishness, may it be unto us the power of God, and the wisdom of God, for our salvation. Convinced that other foundation can no man lay for his eternal happiness, than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus, may we turn with full assurance of

faith to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; and, as he has loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, may his love constrain us to live henceforth no longer to ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again.

Weary and heavy laden with iniquity, let us flee to him for rest, and take upon us his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light. As we are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, may we live a life of faith upon the Son of God, and purify ourselves from all iniquity, even as he is pure.

May our conversation be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour; and when he shall return again, the second time, without sin unto salvation, he shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to that mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Therefore, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE AND DEATH.

BY THE

REV. JOHN COOK,

MINISTER OF LAURENCEKIRK.

PHILIPPIANS i. 21.

"*To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*"

The Epistle to the Philippians was written from Rome, where Paul was imprisoned on account of his preaching the Gospel; and the sentiments expressed in the epistle are interesting, as they exhibit the state of mind in which the Apostle was, while he was undergoing bonds and afflictions, and had to look on death

as no unlikely termination of them. He begins by expressing his great and continual interest in the character and welfare of the Christians at Philippi. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel, from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The Philippians had shewn peculiar attachment to him; he was the first who had gone to them as a preacher of the Gospel (Acts xvi. 12); they had frequently ministered to his necessities when no other Church did so, (Phil. iv. 15,) and now having heard of his imprisonment at Rome, and being desirous of contributing as much as was in their power to his comfort, they had sent Epaphroditus, one of their ministers, to inquire for him, and to give him what they offered for the relief of his wants (Phil. iv. 18). Paul was deeply sensible of their affection, and in this letter, sent to them by Epaphroditus on his return, he acknowledges their gift as most seasonable and most acceptable, and expresses his earnest hope and prayer, that they would continue steadfast in the faith whereby they should be saved. "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ: and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. —My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

The Epistle is full of similar expressions of the warmest affection and Christian regard; it contains no detail of his own sufferings, with which it might have been supposed that his mind was occupied and depressed. He refers, indeed, to the persecutions which he was experiencing, but for the purpose, not of detailing or magnifying them, but of relieving the anxiety and moderating the grief which the Philippians had on his account. He tells them that his sufferings were tending to spread the knowledge of the Saviour, to increase the number of those who believed in him, and to encourage those who believed to greater boldness and confidence — objects which he regarded as of superior moment to any personal interests of his own. "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel." Some of those who believed waxed more confident in the faith, and more bold in speaking the word, when they saw the manifest divine grace by which Paul was enabled to bear his trials: and his imprisonment and sufferings being known and talked of in Rome, the metropolis of the world, and even in the palace of the Emperor—many were led to inquire into the occasion of his imprisonment, and so to hear of the Gospel. Thus his enemies, who thought by the severity of his punishment to suppress the Gospel, were defeating their own ends and promoting his; they were, in effect, proclaiming or preaching Christ Jesus.

It was this view of what was taking place in con-

sequence of his bonds and afflictions, which had brought cheerfulness and contentment to his own breast, and which he now endeavours to convey to the Philippians that it might also lighten their heaviness and sorrow of heart for him. He saw, that while he was in bonds, and even the more because he was in bonds, Christ his blessed Lord was preached—"and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death; for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The Apostle's state of mind was truly a happy one —one in which he was able to endure manifold afflictions and privations with patience and contentment—to speak of them without a murmur, and without a boast of their magnitude—and to think of them only as tending to promote higher and holier objects, the honour of his Lord and the salvation of sinners. How much may we all desire to be able thus in patience to possess our souls, and thus to contribute to the Saviour's honour! We all are born to trouble, and must contemplate the prospect of death as never afar off; and we all ought, in our body and in our spirit, to glorify him who has bought us with his own blood. May God enable us, then, by his Spirit to profit by our meditation on these words, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

1. Let us consider how these words may be applicable to us. When Paul said, "to me to live is Christ," his meaning was, that while he lived, he was an instrument of promoting the honour and the work of Christ, while, if he were dead, he could do so no more; he was willing to live even in bonds and imprisonment, because he believed he was thereby making known the Gospel of Christ, extending his kingdom, and increasing the number of his people.—The life of each one of us may be dedicated to the same service, and to the same end. It is not given to us to promote the cause of Christ in the same way; he has not been pleased to require of us bodily suffering as a means of publishing his Gospel, and bringing men to the knowledge and belief of his truth; but every one of us is placed in circumstances in which it is not only in his power, but it is his duty to live in such a manner as to glorify God, and to honour and obey Jesus Christ. We know that Christ died, and we know the purpose for which he died—to be the propitiation for our sins, that through faith in his blood we might have the forgiveness of our sins; "he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them;" as "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." The great principle of a Christian's life is thus described by Paul—"whether we live, we live unto the Lord—whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." Is there not room for carrying this principle fully and actively into exercise in every situation in which a Christian can be

placed, whether it be high or low, prosperous or adverse? And may not *we* thus live unto Christ, reckoning our life devoted to his service, and rejoicing if it be instrumental in promoting his work, as well as the Apostle who was called to the honourable service of suffering for his sake? In every condition in which we are placed, we may have our conversation such, that men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and our light so shining before men, that seeing our good works they will glorify our Father in heaven. "Herein," said Jesus, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit,"—"being filled," as Paul says, "with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." Instead of following our own wayward inclinations, and viewing everything that befalls us according to our own ofttimes vain wishes, we may shew that we do his will from the heart, and accept all the appointments of his providence in that spirit of devout contentment which Paul so beautifully expresses to the Philippians, while thanking them for their bounty—"I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And when we regard Jesus Christ specially as the Saviour of sinners, we may also look on ourselves as vessels in which his grace may appear in the work of salvation. "I am crucified with Christ," said Paul, "nevertheless I live; yet not

I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." In like manner may his Spirit dwell in our hearts, restraining evil desires, purifying corrupt affections, prompting good inclinations, strengthening weak graces, and renewing and elevating our whole inner man, so that we shall be as new creatures. Thus shall we do honour to our Lord and Saviour by our life; we give him what he asks of us; he asks not, perhaps, that we should suffer or die for his sake;—yet if he does, we shall submit, rejoicing to be counted worthy;—but he does ask of us to open the door and give him our hearts to dwell in, and while we thus cherish the continual communion and fellowship of his Spirit, we may each one say with Paul, "to me to live is Christ."

While Paul counted his life devoted to the service of Christ, he yet admitted and rejoiced to believe that to himself "to die is gain." "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." —It is not difficult to see in what manner all Christians also may cherish the assured hope, that to them to die will be gain. It is not for himself alone, that the Apostle says, that a crown of glory is laid up, but for all them also that love the appearing of the Saviour. Death, then, is like the crossing of the river Jordan on the way to Canaan—the entrance of all that believe in Christ Jesus on the possession of those blessings which they look for hereafter, in consequence of his death.

Death is indeed an immediate relief from the sufferings of this world; to the Apostle it was a relief from cruel persecution and suffering, and to all of us it will bring deliverance from all the miseries of this present time; but it is in a far higher sense than this, that the Christian will view death as a gain—not as a release from pain or privation, but as an admission, whether immediate or prospective, to blessings which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived. In prospect of these as the consequence of death to him, through the merits of Christ's death, he regards the change as one of infinite advantage to his welfare and happiness. Paul says of himself and of all who have the same faith, "knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, we are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Like Stephen, then, the Christian, when a-dying, even though he be in agony like Stephen's, will pray, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," in the assured hope that his Lord will perform what he asks of him; he knows that his Lord is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death, (Rev. i. 18), and that of all that the Father hath given him he will lose nothing, but will raise them up again at the last day. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Their souls are delivered from all the power of sin, are never again exposed to temptation, are made perfect in holiness, and rest in peace, waiting for the redemption of their body in the last day; and in that day shall be

made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

Is not death, then, an event which the Christian may reckon to be for his gain? It is the announcement that his trials and probation are at an end; it is the summons which calls him home to another and a better state; it is the forerunner of all the glories which are reserved for him in the world to come. Death, indeed, must ever be accompanied with some measure of pain or sorrow to mortal man; the putting off of the earthly tabernacle, and the separation from earthly friends will occasion anxiety or distress. Paul speaks of himself as "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." But when death, though occasioning anxieties like these, is viewed as every Christian is privileged to view it, as unlocking to him the inestimable treasures which are at God's right hand, he may well count the sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. He will not seek to hasten the hour of his departure, knowing that it is appointed for him, and will come in God's own good time, but when it is come, and he hears his Lord calling him home, he will say with confidence of hope, "Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus."

2. Let us consider of how great importance it is for our true honour and happiness, that we be habitually in that state of mind in which we can say with the Apostle, "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,"—regarding our life as at all times for Christ's service,

and death as accompanied by such inestimable blessings. —It will best prepare us, at once for all the duties we may have to discharge, for all the dangers we may have to encounter, for all the distresses we may have to bear, in this present world. We know then what is the true end of our being, and are able to direct our life accordingly, to those objects which are truly valuable, and not to those which in the end shall profit us nothing. Viewing our life, our continuance in the flesh, as intended not for the gratification of carnal desires, but for the glory of God and the honour of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall always seek to live in such a way as to promote these high objects, and so to enjoy his favour, and work out our own salvation. We shall still be in danger of temptations which will arise and persuade us to sin; but we shall look on sin as a grievous departure from the end of our being, and turn away from it as an abomination to the Lord. Worldly motives may be suggested which would lead to guile, fraud, revenge, or other unseemly conduct; but we shall always take our motives of conduct not from short-sighted views of momentary advantage which even the children of this world learn not to rely on—not from any considerations which are merely of this world—but from the principles of that heavenly doctrine which teaches that godliness is great gain, both in this life and in that which is to come. Distresses will come upon us; but knowing that God is with us, we shall fear no evil, and not be afraid with any amazement, for He will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Him. We shall be able in

suffering to speak cheerfully, as did Paul, to those who are about us. We shall be "careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God."—It was a principle like this, of entire confidence in God and submission to his will, which inspired Job, when, in the midst of his anguish, he exclaimed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and the prophet Habakkuk too, when he said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." It was this Christian principle of devotedness to God's service in Christ, and reliance on his wisdom and grace, which enabled the Apostle to say of himself and his fellow-servants in the ministry, "we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed—perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken—cast down, but not destroyed—always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Death itself may be approaching, but we shall be prepared to resign our life readily to Him from whom we had it only as a trust, and to meet death as even more gainful to us, because through Christ we have peace with God, and a joyful hope of everlasting life.

The state of mind, then, which has been described as that of the Apostle, and of every sincere and advanced Christian, is one which prepares us for performing every duty aright,—for acting in every situation of life

with honour and with godliness,—for resisting or avoiding every temptation,—for meeting every trial with composure, and bearing every affliction with patience,—and for laying down our life in peace and in hope; and it must surely be of infinite importance for us to acquire and to maintain a state of mind so blessed. While we see its importance and its value in itself, our sense of its value may be vastly increased when we perceive that there is no other principle or state of mind that can in any degree afford to us such guidance, comfort, and hope. In the world there are principles which may sometimes not lead us astray, and prospects which may at times buoy us up with expectation, but there are none that will be able, at all times and in all circumstances, to lead us safely and impart to us cheerfulness and hope. Those who make power or wealth the object of their life, may for a while not be led directly in the way of destruction; but whenever it happens, as it must, that ambition or the love of money, leads one way, and the highest interests and obligations of the individual,—the good of his soul and his duty to God,—point to another, what shall he do? If he continue to follow the vain object of his wishes, it is obviously to his own injury and ruin; or if, with a hard struggle, he seeks to escape from it even for a time, he is confessing that the principle of his life is an error, and that, if carried out to the full, it would land him in destruction. Let us take any other of the principles of the world, or all of them together, for our guide and stay in life, and we shall find the result the same; for a while the prospect may be fair, but it ends in proving itself a delusion. A man who walks by such rules,

and has no faith or hope in Christ, may comfort himself when he is in sorrow, because some of the objects of his desire are still preserved to him; one man, when his friends die, that he still has honours and influence; another, when he loses power, that he still has wealth; another, when riches take their wings and flee from him, that he still can rejoice in his youth, his health, or his friends; in every case of distress which happens in the world, circumstances may be found that will lighten or relieve it; but if the heart relies only on supports such as these, what will it do when all these also are taken away—when he who rejoiced in his strength is brought low by disease—when he who trusted in riches is reduced to want—when he who built all his hope upon the world's honours, finds the foundation crumbling and falling away from beneath him? Then they will look and they will cry for the objects that have been wont to give them hope, but they will look and cry in vain. How different is the state of him, the principle of whose life is that of the Apostle, "to me to live is Christ and to die is gain!" He is not unfitted for worldly duty, but qualified for it in the highest and best manner, by being led to act on the highest and best principles;—it is his duty to Christ that he should fulfil diligently and faithfully every office and trust committed to him;—but he is also prepared for every reverse that can happen to him; though it may seem grievous to him, yet it may prove joyous; it may tend to the honour of his Lord, to whose service he owes his life, and it may work out for himself the peaceable fruits of righteousness;—having respect to the recompense of reward, he would rather suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the

pleasures of sin for a season; in death he fears no evil; when the earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, he enters into one eternal in the heavens; when he is absent from the body, he is present with the Lord. —Assured of the importance of such a principle of life, and of the blessedness of such a death, who would not say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

3. Then let us, in conclusion, advert to the practical view of this important subject—that the two parts of this compound state of mind or principle of life, are closely and inseparably joined, living unto Christ and looking on death as gain. If we would have death a gain to us, we must live unto Christ.—We have spoken of the two together, for it is impossible to separate them; every one who is in Christ, who lives unto him now, or has the spirit of Christ living in him, shall assuredly have victory over death, and in the world to come everlasting life; and every one who is *not* in him shall at death be left in his sins, and find death the summons to judgment and to condemnation. To speak of the matter otherwise, would be wholly to overlook the death of Christ; he died to abolish death for those who should believe in him, but he leaves death, with all its terrors, the same for those who will not believe. If we should speak of any of those who truly have believed and lived in Christ, as not happy in death, we should be denying that his death had secured his purpose of bringing salvation to all who believe on him;—or if we should speak of those who did not believe in him and did not think of him in their life, as yet happy in their death, we should be saying that there is some other

way than through him by which men can be saved from their sins. Either of these views is utterly opposed to the tenor and to the language of the Gospel, which assures us, on one hand, that "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,"—and on the other, that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," and that "he that believeth not is condemned already."

When it appears that a Christian life and a peaceful and happy death are inseparable, there is evidently ground for our rejoicing that we can have in our life such testimony as will give us hope in death; and we ought to give good heed that we are not acting on any vain delusion that these may be separated. Then let us see that we are living by faith in him—that we hold our life devoted to his honour and to his work, and seek to have all our thoughts and ways conformed to his example and to his doctrine; it is then that we can hope with confidence, but it is then only, that to die will be gain. Yet there are many who believe the delusion, and flatter themselves with the hope, that though they have not thought of Jesus Christ as a Saviour in their life, in their death he will think of them—or somehow they shall be saved. As all the living know that they shall die, every man desires to find some way of counting death a gain, and of laying a flattering unction to his soul when pained with apprehension of death's terrors. And so we hear many say of themselves too readily, that death will be a happy change and release from suffering, and others say too readily of them when they die, that they have gone to their rest. What gain, what rest will death bring to him

who in his life has disbelieved and dishonoured Christ, and never to his latest hour repented him of all the ungodly deeds which he has ungodly committed,—or to him who has despised Christ, making light of his Gospel—never heeding his ordinances, or seeking forgiveness through his blood? Far from bettering his condition, death summons him into the presence of his Judge, puts an end to the time of his trial—the season of merciful visitation to him,—removes the last ray of hope that shall ever be shed on him, and brings him into the place and the agony of the impenitently wicked, —the everlastingly condemned. We judge no man; to his own master every man must stand or fall; and He with whom all things are possible, may recall a sinner from his ways before his last hour is spent. But when we see that the inevitable termination of an unconverted, un-Christian life, persevered in to the end, is a death not of gain but of utter ruin—not of hope but of agony and eternal woe—ought we not to warn every man to flee from such a death, to cease from such a life, and to turn to the stronghold of salvation? Surely it is a stronghold when it is built upon a rock—when the gates of hell shall not prevail against it—when it will afford a covert from every tempest, and a refuge in every time of affliction or dismay. Be persuaded, then, my brethren, to be followers of Paul, even as he was of Christ; count not your life dear to you so that you may finish your course with joy, and the work which you have received of the Lord Jesus; and strive always to realise for yourselves the blessed state of the Apostle, "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Amen.

SERMON XVII.

RECONCILIATION WITH GOD AN EARNEST OF COMPLETE SALVATION.

BY THE

REV. DAVID LOGAN,
MINISTER OF STENTON.

ROM. v. 10.

"*Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*"

On the coasts of this globe, there are many of what are called high water or bar harbours, where admission at all, or a safe admission, can be gained only at certain periods of the tide, or in particular states of the weather. You can easily conceive a vessel arriving in the bay of one of these harbours after a long and perilous voyage, and obliged to cast anchor and wait in patience till the

rising of the tide permitted them to pass the bar. The period, though expected to be short, is still a very trying one. They have been long cooped up within the narrow compass of the vessel, and are desirous of ranging at large on the wished-for shore. They have been long absent from their native home, and the dearest objects of their affection, and in proportion as they are near the one and love the other, so with the more eager desire do they long to embrace the objects of their heart. Short though the time may be, however, and calm and serene the sky, yet in this ever changeful scene a dark night may come on intercepting their view of the land which they love—a tempestuous wind may arise, wakening their hopes, exciting their fears, and causing them reluctantly to weigh anchor, and to seek again the trackless deep as their only safety. And what is now, under Him who directs the storm, the chief prop and stay of their confidence? It is the seaworthiness of the vessel in which they are embarked—that she who triumphantly outrode many storms on the trackless deep, will not founder by a wind from the shore—and that even now the time is not distant when they will enter the haven of safety and rest.

Somewhat similar, in a certain sense, is the present condition of the Christian. Heaven is his home—the heavenly inhabitants the objects of his purest and most ardent affection. Hope is the anchor of the soul, mooring him to the land of everlasting rest; and by means of faith, he enjoys foretastes of the blessedness of that land, whetening his purified desires for the full enjoyment. In the meantime, however, through the strength

of indwelling sin, and the imperfections cleaving to him whilst in the body, such mists may be engendered and exhalations arise, as will intercept the complacent smiles of his Heavenly Father's countenance. Dejection and darkness may succeed to this. Storms also may arise, exciting the fears, discouraging the hopes, weakening the faith, and tending to extinguish the love of the heavenward voyager.

And is there no stay to which to repair in such hours of trial and seasons of danger? Yes, verily. Not only does the foundation of God ever stand sure, having this seal, "the Lord knoweth them that are his"—not only is the finished work of the Saviour all-complete and efficacious—"having finished transgression, and made an end of sin-offering, and brought in everlasting righteousness"—but though he died he also rose again, and ever liveth, appearing in the presence of God in behalf of his people. This *is* the confidence of the genuine disciples of Christ. On this ground of hope they may unwaveringly rely, assured, that though it may be through fire and water, they will at last be brought to a wealthy place. The reasoning of the Apostle in the passage of which the text forms a part, goes to establish this confidence. The text especially fixes the attention on the conclusiveness of the reasoning—and by attending thereto, prayerfully and anxiously desirous of being established in the faith,—the genuine believer will not be tempted to cast away his confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

The Apostle, in the passage before us, presents for our consideration topics of a highly interesting and in-

structive nature and character. His reasoning upon these is from the greater to the less. The conclusion contained in the text is not only irresistible in itself, but necessarily involving, and leading us back to the whole process of reasoning in the argument;—by glancing shortly at each of these steps in the process, we will not only be prepared to join issue with the Apostle, "that much more being reconciled by the death of Christ, we shall be saved by his life,"—but in conducting the illustration, we shall, by the teaching of the Spirit, be also enabled to judge whether we have part or lot in this matter.

And the term or phrase, "being reconciled," being applicable, either unto God's reconciliation to man, or man's reconciliation to God, or to both—and both of them being included in the Apostle's reasoning, and strengthening most materially the conclusion which he draws; we shall therefore in the subsequent remarks, illustrate the subject in reference to both. And,—

First, More immediately in reference to God. The term reconciliation and its adjuncts, as occurring in Holy Scripture, present before us truths of vast importance indeed—truths entering deeply into the very vitals, if I may so speak, of the economy of redemption—and truths concerning which it is of incalculable consequence towards the commencement and furtherance of our own salvation, that we form accurate and somewhat adequate scriptural ideas.

Reconciliation is the restoring to a state of friendship parties who had been at variance with each other. To reconcile, is indicative of the change of the state of

matters, by removing the grounds of difference between the parties at variance. Disagreement always implying error or fault on the one side or the other; reparation or redress satisfactory to the injured party, becomes hereby necessary in order to reconciliation. The parties presented by the Apostle in the passage before us, being God and man—God being necessarily the justly-offended party, it belonged to guilty rebellious man to reconcile himself to God. But wherewithal could man thus come before God? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? No! Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt-offering; the redemption of the soul is precious,—and as to any thing that man could do, it must have ceased for ever.

What man, however, could never have solved, nor the solution being made, would he ever have been able to remove the obstacle, God hath both unravelled and removed. "He was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; not imputing to men their trespasses." Mark here the peculiarity in the Scripture application of the term *reconciling*. It is not the offending party who comes to repair the injury, or make satisfaction to the justly-offended and injured lawgiver, but it is God who steps forward and reconciles the world to himself, or rather himself unto the world. And that this peculiarity in the application of the term reconciliation, is not confined to the subject of human redemption, several passages of Scripture clearly shew. Thus when Saul's anger against David burned so hot, that he and his attendants were obliged to seek safety among the Philistines—

when Israel and the Philistines were about to engage in battle, and David going down with the latter against his countrymen, the princes of the Philistines fearing treachery, were displeased at David's presence, and say unto Achish their king, "wherewith should this fellow reconcile himself to his master; should it not be with the heads of these men?" meaning their own friends. Here Saul is considered as the offended party, and David as the offender—yet it is not said that David should reconcile his master to him, but himself to his master—that is, should make his peace with him, by presenting the heads of his enemies as a kind of satisfaction or atonement. Again, our Saviour says (Matt. v. 23, 24.) "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Here the person offering the gift is represented as the offender; yet he is not commanded to go and reconcile his brother to him, but himself unto his brother. The import, however, of which command is, that he is to make satisfaction to his brother for his offence, and thereby obtain his forgiveness.

This is the meaning of the term reconciliation and its adjuncts when applicable to God in his actings throughout the plan of redemption. He so far reconciled himself to man, when he devised the plan whereby he could continue the just God, whilst the justifier of the ungodly who believe on Jesus. He so far reconciled himself to man, when he gave his only-begotten Son

a ransom for many. He so far reconciled himself to man, when he testified his acceptance of the obedience and sufferings of Christ unto the death by raising him from the dead, and setting him down at his own right hand. And he so far reconciled himself to man, when he gave and continues with man, the ministry of reconciliation. In all these aspects the term reconciliation is applicable to God, and to God only. He alone, though the offended party, *could* make any active movement *towards* and *upon* man, the offender—and this aspect of the case gives a wonderful additional brilliancy to the whole work of human redemption.

Now the reasoning of the Apostle, as bearing on this view of the case, is shortly this—hath God out of absolutely spontaneous loving-kindness thought compassionately on man in his low and lost estate—hath he exerted his infinite wisdom, in devising a scheme, whereby "in the riches of his grace through Christ, he hath even abounded towards man in all wisdom and prudence"—hath the character of the divine holiness been signally vindicated, and the claims of infinite justice and unimpeachable truth satisfied in the obedience and suffering unto the very death of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son — hath the Almighty power of God been put forth in raising up Christ from the dead—have the claims of equity been established in setting the Son down at the Father's right hand, and crowning him with mediatorial glory and honour—hath the Father himself at such a costly expenditure of paternal love, completed the most wonderfully perfect scheme—hath the ransom price not only been

fully paid, but the open acknowledgment of the cancelled debt made in the face of an astonished universe —hath the divine machinery, the pattern of things in the heavens, not only been constructed and perfected, but ready at the bidding of the great Artificer to begin the work of mercy and of love—are the fields more than white unto the harvest; myriads upon myriads of souls ready to perish and requiring redemption—are the very heavenly host, like the cherubim above the mercy seat of old, eagerly prying unto this hitherto undeveloped mystery of infinite love; and wistfully desirous of contemplating its workings in its blessed fruits—when lo! the hand of the divine Artificer, ready to touch the life-giving apparatus is suspended—it is drawn back—it is thrust into his bosom; producing the silence of ungratified desire in heaven, of disappointment on earth, of joy in hell.

And, would such a part be worthy of the great God to act? Would it be consistent with the all-perfect character of Jehovah. Could the wisdom which devised and consummated the scheme, rest satisfied till its excellence was developed in its glorious effects? Could the power which created and gave it energy remain quiescent, when by a single touch of its life-giving energy, all would spring into activity, and efficacy, and universally gracious and spiritual effects? would the unbounded loving-kindness which prompted the original and every subsequent movement of all the other perfections, ever cease stimulating the whole into effective operation, till a harvest of glory redounded to the Godhead in the gathering in of souls from the east and

the west, from the north and the south? It is impossible. Not only is a part like this unworthy of the all-perfect Jehovah, but any thing at all resembling it among men would be condemned as with one and a loud voice.

Were a husbandman at much toil and expence to drain, to clean, to manure, to sow, and to watch and check the growth of weeds that they might not choke the good grain—were his efforts successful even beyond hope—the year crowned with the divine goodness—the fruits of the ground cut down and gathered in in safety—were machinery constructed for thrashing out and preparing the corn for food fit for man and beast—were the herd lowing in the stall—cleanness of teeth among all those who had been employed in the previous operations—and yet the husbandman withheld his own hands and the hands of all those under his influence and control; and would allow no exertion to be made towards appeasing the cravings of hunger and the very extremities of suffering—would not the indignation and execration of all be concentrated, and that most righteously, upon such an individual? and as a blot upon his species he be held up to the detestation and loathing of every succeeding age? If the thing is never exemplified even among the most degenerate of Adam's depraved descendants, it can never be imputable to the all-perfect Lord God. No! He *will* carry into effect the scheme which boundless goodness suggested, which infinite wisdom devised, and almighty power executed. The great husbandman will reap a harvest of glory in the salvation of a lost world. He will gather the

wheat into his garner, fit for the master's use. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone—or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent—or if he shall ask an egg will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children—how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

2*dly*, The next thing contained in the text, confirming and strengthening the conclusion which the Apostle draws, is the contrast implied between the efficacy and power of the life and the death of Christ. "Much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Now, although the death of Christ is not here specifically mentioned, yet it is directly referred to, and a contrast stated, though tacitly, between his death and his life. How was it that God was reconciled to man, and man to God? It was by the death of his Son. Let us dwell then in thought a little on the strength of the Apostle's conclusion in reference to this topic; and we will discover in it every thing invigorating to the faith, quickening to the love, and animating to the hope of the believer in his name.

Even the most inattentive reader of Holy Scripture must have observed, that much is therein ascribed to the death of Christ. God's coming at all into gracious nearness with man is ascribed to it. Every new covenant blessing as to purchase is ascribed to it. As to bestowal, Christ crucified is the medium. As to efficiency, it is the blood of Christ alone that cleanseth from sin. As to acceptance, *this* is in the beloved

alone — "for no man cometh to the Father but by him." In short, not only by the rent veil of his flesh is the way into the holiest now made manifest; but through the same efficacy is this way kept open. Like Jacob's ladder, it is the medium of intercourse between heaven and earth—God dispensing blessings through this channel alone, and the persons and services of God's people regarded with acceptance through the same efficacy alone.

Now, if such effects are ascribed to, and naturally flow from the death of Christ, much more may we look for, and naturally expect consequences, even if possible surpassing these, springing from his life. In the natural world, death is the type, the concentrated essence as it were, most emphatically descriptive of all that is torpid, incapable of feeling, and without the slightest power of putting forth the least possible energy—whereas, life is full of sentient feeling, of activity, of motion and power, and the putting forth of that power is limited only by the capabilities of the being in whom it inheres. And was even Christ in these respects an exception to this? He was not. Much as is ascribed to his death, and in the department to which it belongs too much cannot be ascribed to it, yet it possesses this incalculable efficacy and power only in connection with his life—and that too, only with his resurrection and exaltation life. Had he continued under the power of death, no mediatorial nor saving fruits of it would ever have appeared. "Had Christ not risen, your faith in him would have been vain; our preaching would have been also vain—and we would have been all yet in our

sins. "As under the law the perfection and efficacy of the sacrifice, consisted not so much in the killing of the victim as in the sprinkling of its blood in the holy place; and till this was performed, no atonement for the sin was effected; so this was only "a pattern of things in the heavens." Had not Christ risen and ascended, and carried with him into the holiest of all above, the memorials of his own sacrifice—infinitely valuable, incalculably efficacious, and omnipotently powerful, though the virtue and energy of this sacrifice might have been, yet would it have remained entirely quiescent, and no fruits of its surpassing excellence have appeared.

Mark here, in this aspect of the case, how much force and power the Apostle's reasoning in the text derives from the life of Christ as combined with his death. It is not so much his mediatorial life, as affording opportunities for the fruits of his death to appear, and hereby manifesting its incalculable efficacy and excellence in these blessed fruits; as by the transference, as it were, of what gave worth and efficacy in the death, to the activity and energy in the life. And what was it which rendered the death or sacrifice of Christ infinitely meritorious? It was not that he was a man, or even a perfect man, but that he was the God-man. Not that the Godhead *did* or *could* suffer, but being the altar in the sacrifice which sanctified the gift, therefore was it "that we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;" and therefore was it that "God hath purchased the Church with his own

blood." Oh, what encouragement, and what a firm ground of confidence does the Apostle's reasoning in this view of the case afford to the genuine believer in the name of Christ? Transfer the infinite worth and weight of character, as giving value, and efficacy, and power to the death of Christ,—transfuse all this into his mediatorial life, and what vitality, and energy, and power concentrate not only here; but how are all these pledged as a guarantee, that the foundation which was laid in the death, will be reared into a glorious edifice by the life of Christ, in fashioning the temple of his mystical body into living stones, polished, and built up in him? If his death effected so much, much more rather will his life more than perfect all. Here you have all the qualities, the infinitely excellent qualities, which prompted and gave value to the one, in active operation in the other. Would the Captain of our salvation ever have subjected himself to being made "perfect through sufferings," had he not intended to bring many sons to glory? Would he ever have submitted to travail of soul in the expiation of sin, and forego the satisfaction which then bore him up in seeing of the blessed fruits of this travail? Could all power in heaven and on earth ever have been righteously entrusted into his hands; but in the confidence that he would faithfully exert that power. Impossible! The love which prompted him to stoop so low, will never fail to stimulate his Almighty arm in gathering his little ones from among the pots of corruption, and beautifying them with holiness. The love which stimulated him to bear our sins in his own body on

the tree, will never allow his right arm to be drawn back in plucking them as brands out of the burning. The almighty power put forth in his own resurrection, is a pledge, that if *then* it was "Christ the first fruits," *afterwards* it will be, "they that are Christ's at his coming." The mediatorial glory with which his own head is encircled, is a guarantee that his people shall be "raised with him, and sit with him in heavenly places." His promise, as the God of truth, ensures this. His whole character, as the all-perfect Jehovah, renders it indubitable. "He is able to save to the very uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "He gives his sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "Because I live, ye shall live also." These are the assurances of the faithful and true witness. "Trust in him, therefore, and be not afraid, for in the Lord Jehovah is righteousness and strength." And, "if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

3*dly*, The third step in the process of the Apostle's reasoning refers more immediately to man, and carries with it into the bosom of the genuine believer the most irresistible evidence of its truth and power.

"Much more being reconciled, *we* shall be saved by his life."

Whilst there is a sense of the term reconciliation applicable alone to God, and this is the sense to which we have formerly alluded, there is also a meaning of it, as occurring in Holy Scripture, applicable and applied to man. Not that man either does or *can* do anything, or offer any sacrifice, to appease or turn away the righteous displeasure of a just and holy God against the transgressor—nay, in this also, at least in the initiatory steps of the process, man is altogether passive, or worked upon entirely by God, through the word and ordinances of divine grace. Whilst "God was in Christ, however, reconciling himself to a guilty, lost world; he hath also committed to us the ministry of reconciliation;" and his ambassadors "beseech us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." This latter meaning is the sense in which it is applicable to man. This is the application of the scheme of redemption to one of the great purposes for which it was formed. When this application becomes effectual, then man becomes reconciled, or at peace with God, no less than God reconciled to him. Having become the subject of this reconciliation, he is conscious to himself that a rooted and thorough change hath passed upon his state and character as in the sight of God. Lately he was dead whilst he lived, spiritually dead; but now "hath he been quickened to newness of life," and "is alive unto God, through Jesus Christ." Originally his inner man was a spiritual chaos, without form and void; but now he is created anew in Christ Jesus.

"Once was he darkness, but now is he light in the Lord"—and "the eyes of his understanding being opened, he sees light clearly in God's light." Formerly he was self-willed, obdurate, and rebellious, but now "he has been made willing," "inclined, both to will and to do God's good pleasure." Lately his heart was hard as the stone or adamant, but now "the heart of flesh has been given him." Originally the fountain of the heart was corrupt, deceitful, even very wicked; but now the springs of action have been purified at the source. "A new heart has been given him, and a new spirit put within him." Lately his mind being carnal, was enmity against God, but this enmity is now transfused into friendship. Once he loved sin, and derived his chief enjoyment from the ways of it; but now he is a lover of God, and God's law is his delight. Lately he lived in malice, hateful and hating his brethren, but hatred is now changed into love, and he walks in love. He "lays aside all wrath, and malice, and evil speaking, and hypocrisy, and puts on bowels of mercies, meekness, gentleness, forbearing and forgiving." Formerly his affections were set on things seen and temporal as a portion, but now they are set on the things which are above, on "the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading in the heavens." In short, *being reconciled*, he is now "a new creature in Christ Jesus—old things have passed away, and all things have become new." He now "puts off as concerning the former conversation, the old man with his deeds which are corrupt, and renewed in the spirit of his mind, puts on the new man,

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." He endeavours daily "to apprehend that for which also he is apprehended of Christ Jesus; and accounts not himself to have apprehended or to be already perfect, but forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, he presses towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He loves holiness, he follows holiness, and "endeavours to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," and thus manifests himself to be actually and truly reconciled to God.

Now, observe how forcibly, and convincingly, and satisfactorily to the experienced Christian, the conclusion is, which the Apostle draws in the text—"much more *being reconciled*, we shall be saved by Christ's life. What hath been already wrought in the heart of the believer, is an earnest and a pledge of what God will continue to do, and delight in doing. Hath he changed rebellion into loyalty, he will never fail to reward with the smiles of his approval the acts of loyalty cheerfully and submissively rendered. Hath he changed enmity into affection, he will never cease to draw forth renewed and more ardent expressions of this heaven-born love. Hath hostility been converted into friendship, he will continue to prove himself the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Hath he changed hatred into love, he will never fail to cheer him onward in the way, when walking in love. Hath the hard and stony heart been melted into the heart of flesh, he will delight in communicating those heavenly

impressions which this new heart hath been rendered susceptible of receiving, of cherishing and delighting in. Hath loathsomeness been changed into beauty by the comeliness of Christ put upon him, the heavenly bridegroom will rest in his love, and rejoice over his Church with singing. Have the filthy rags been exchanged for the fine linen, opportunities of walking in white will never be awanting. In short, if our heavenly Father came graciously near when we were repulsive, he will never leave us now that he hath rendered us attractive. If he visited in compassion when we were fighting against him, he will never leave us desolate when faithfully serving and cleaving to him with purpose of heart. If he lifted us up when lying among the pots of corruption, and beautified us with holiness, he will never fail to set us, as it were, with princes—"to raise us up together with Christ, and cause us to sit together with him." The same reasoning is applicable here as that by the Apostle to the Hebrews, "the spiritual pilgrims, desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "He that hath begun the good work will carry it on till the day of Christ," and "will not leave us till he hath done that which he hath spoken to us of." "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ

is God's." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? (As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." At present there may be much darkness, many disquietudes, much dread of making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; many fears lest a promise being left us of entering into the heavenly rest, we should seem to come short of it. But to end with the comparison with which we began, *so* was it in the vessel which had drifted from her moorings. Among that interesting crew, there was much anxiety of heart, many a downcast look, many fearful forebodings, when by the violence of the storm obliged to weigh anchor, and betake themselves again to the trackless deep. Many an agitated breast also was lining the shore, and becoming more troubled as the spray and darkness bedimmed the objects of their eager gaze. Many a beacon lighted up to guard from shipwreck, and many an earnest prayer ejaculated to Him who rules the raging of the sea. And did they cry and plead in vain? No, verily: the morning dawned, the storm subsided, the tide flowed, and with

prosperous breeze, and tumultuous joy, they entered the haven of safety, of love, and rest.

And so shall it be with the voyagers heavenwards. In reference to them, there may be many tumults within, and tossings without — many misgivings on earth, and anxieties in heaven. But "the Lord sitteth upon the floods, he sitteth king, and ever shall." "The Lord will bless his people with peace." "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads—they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon; and as a faithful witness in heaven, Selah!" Comfort yourselves with these blessed truths; and may the Lord establish you in the faith and hope of the Gospel of peace.

SERMON XVIII.

A RELIGIOUS EXAMPLE A RICH INHERITANCE.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS IRVINE,
MINISTER OF LUNDIE AND FOWLIS.

PROV. xiii. 22.

"*A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.*"

The motives presented to us by the Word of God, for our devoting ourselves to the service of the Lord our Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer, are many and various. They have reference to ourselves—to our children—to our country—to the whole human race—

they embrace the things of this life, while they refer principally to that which is to come. They speak to our personal interests in such terms as these—"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that to come." They address our patriotic and benevolent feelings by reminding us, that the wise and good are the salt of the earth. And they touch a tenderer cord, when they tell us, as in the text, that "a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children."

It is not necessary, we are confident, to say one word in proof of the power of the appeal made in the words before us. Who will undertake to set forth in adequate terms the affection you have for your children, and the hold they have upon your heart? Sure we are, it will not be those who have felt it—for your children are endeared to you by a thousand tender ties. They are entwined around every affection of the heart—they are dear to you as the light of your eyes, and the breath of life;—and even among the irrational creation, how often do we see the parent placing little value on her own life, in comparison with the life of her offspring? In proof of all this, were proof necessary, we might appeal to your own observation and feelings, to the records of history, or to the Word of God. We prefer the last source of evidence, because of its undoubted truth, and universal application. "Me have ye bereaved of my children"—said the patriarch Jacob, in the bitterness of his heart—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me."—Or hear the yet bitterer

cry of distress bursting from the tender parental heart of Israel's King, and that too, for a rebellious subject and profligate child. In his secret chamber, these are the affectionate breathings of a father's heart—"O Absalom, my son—my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee; O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Now brethren, if there be all these irrepressible and inexpressible feelings connected with the relation of parent and child, you will certainly admit that the connecting their present and future happiness so intimately with our conduct in the world, and character we maintain before God and man, affords one of the strongest reasons possible for our living holy, justly, and unblameably in the world, and for our walking worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called; —for the Psalmist says, "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." And Solomon, his son and successor, says in our text, "a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children."

In discoursing from these words, we purpose, in dependence on the God of all grace, — First, to describe the character here assigned to the man who transmits this inheritance. Secondly, to point out the nature and origin of the inheritance he is here said to leave to his children's children. And Lastly, we shall found on all this an admonition to parents and to children.

First, we are to describe the character here assigned to the man who transmits this inheritance—and this we shall do in very few words. In our text, he is

called "a *good man.*" Now, you are all aware, that no man is naturally good—for by nature the very reverse is the fact—we are alienated from God, and his enemies by wicked works. But the God of glory, the Son of the Highest, in the fulness of time, came down from heaven to seek and to save the lost. He took our nature upon him, and shed his precious blood for us; and now his intimation is this, "whosoever believeth in him shall not come unto condemnation, but shall have everlasting life." The guilt of their sin is washed away. They have redemption through the blood of Jesus—the forgiveness of sins. Nay, they not only obtain pardon for the past, but grace to walk in newness of life for the time to come. The Holy Spirit is sent down to dwell in them. They are quickened from their death and sin, and born again, so that henceforth they walk in newness of life. They are strengthened for every duty and every trial—and enabled to run without being weary, and to walk without being faint. Thus, although no man is *naturally*—although, in this world, no man is *absolutely* good—the person described in our text has had all his sins forgiven unto him, for his sake who died for our sin and rose for our justification. He has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and he is daily endeavouring to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord—and even now he is an heir of God, and a joint heir of Christ. Let it then be proclaimed, as with trumpet sound, that his goodness is not his own, nor is it of his own acquisition. He is indeed clothed with righteousness as with a garment—but it is the righteousness of Christ—freely,

graciously given unto him, without money and without price. The case of the guests unexpectedly brought from the high-ways to the marriage of the king's son, will illustrate this. They were suddenly brought from the lanes and the high-ways to that august assembly. But the fitting raiment was provided for them; and the presumptuous guest who took his place without the wedding garment, was cast into outer darkness, not because he could not *obtain*, but because he would not *wear* it. And so, it is in the robe of Christ's righteousness that the believer is clothed. It is under the influence of his Spirit that he attains a title to the appellation, in our text bestowed on *him*, who leaves an inheritance to his children's children.

We press this matter on your serious consideration, at the very outset, that ye may, each for himself, see whether ye have, by the grace of God, acquired the character to which this precious privilege belongs. Whether ye are making it your constant aim to have a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward men. Whether ye are keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Whether, as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, ye are living under the influence of his Spirit dwelling in you, and adorning the doctrine you profess, by a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel; for, if so, to you belongs the *name*, and with it the *privilege* described in our text. As good men, ye will transmit an inheritance to your children's children.

We now go on, in the *second* place, to inquire into the nature and origin of the *inheritance* the good man is here said to transmit. There is something so *cheering*, so *exciting*, in the very name of an inheritance

when conjoined with those who are so dear to us, even when this is merely of a terrestrial and perishing nature, that it rouses every energy of mind and body, and calls forth untiring activity. In the hope and prospect of this, what toils and privations have been borne! What perils have been encountered! What crimes have been perpetrated? And yet, when acquired, it was to an immortal being worthless and perishing. We are, however, to speak principally of an inheritance certain in the acquisition—imperishable in its nature—capable of satisfying every want—and exactly suited to our wants in time, and throughout eternity. And we pray you, for yourselves, and for those who are so dear to you, to covet the best gifts, and to seek above all things to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.

In descending to particulars, however, we observe—First, that the children of the good man derive from him a rich inheritance in the religious instructions they have received from him. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch, if he understood what he was reading, he replied, "How can I, except some one should guide me?" Now, the plain truth here stated is still more evident in the case of children. They need some one to guide them to knowledge, and most of all to the knowledge of divine things. To imagine that it grows by instinct is to imagine a vain thing. Means must be used to communicate all kinds of information, more especially that which maketh wise unto salvation. The tender plant must be both trained and pruned, that it may grow in the right direction, and be fitted to bear fruit. And Solomon says, "Train up a child in the way he

should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." And O! how gracious is the assurance. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

Such is the necessity for this religious training, and the blessed effects of it. And now, we ask, who is the man who will be most active in sowing this precious heavenly seed; and under whose hand is it most likely to become a plant of renown? Will it be the man who cares for this world alone, and who regards all care and concern about reconciliation with God and the prospects of a coming eternity, as the day-dreams of a visionary? Or will it not rather be the man whose heart and affections are in those things that are above —whose chief care and concern are not for time, but eternity—and to whom it is as his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father? Such a man regards himself and his children not merely as creatures of time, but more especially as immortal beings. He knows and feels that he and they would not be profited though they were to gain the whole world if the soul is lost. He is habitually looking beyond all earthly perishing things to the fulness of joy and eternity of pleasures that are at God's right hand, and in him the earnest expectation of the creature is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. This, brethren, is the diligent and faithful—this is the successful teacher of the children God has given to him—for his heart is in the work—he feels the *awful*, the *eternal* importance, of the lessons he is teaching. He knows that their eternal interest is bound up in their receiving this pre-

cious seed of divine truth—and he sows in firm unshaken faith, knowing that the God of all grace has promised to give the increase. I do not *say*, brethren, nor do I wish you to *understand*, that a good man will restrict his teaching to spiritual things. Quite the reverse. It is his *duty*, as it will be his *delight*, to communicate himself, or through the instrumentality of others, all useful knowledge within his reach, that his children may not only discharge creditably the duties of their present station, but that they may rise to a higher, and adorn it also. But whilst he does all *this* that worldly men do—and does it too with a zeal and diligence to which they are strangers, because he leans on an Almighty arm to which they are strangers—he will never forget that the only really precious, and absolutely necessary knowledge, is that which comes from above and makes wise unto salvation. Have not those, then, who have been privileged with this instruction in divine things, from those lips from which teaching is the sweetest and most impressive, and at that season when the heart is the most open to good impressions? Have not the children of the good man, thus taught, inherited therein a rich inheritance?

Secondly, we observe that the children of the good man derive a rich inheritance from his example. You must all be aware how prone we are, at any age, to imitate those to whom we look up with respect and reverence, and more especially how peculiarly strong this is in children. There is a time, indeed, when this seems almost their only mode of acting; and ye who are parents know that your children are far more

prone to *imitate* your *example* than to *obey* your *commands*. What they see with their eyes in youth, makes a far deeper impression than what they hear with their ears. Now, from the description already given of the person mentioned in our text, you can easily understand what kind of example he will set before his children. And we just ask you to suppose that they have, from youth up, had the benefit of this pious, godly example—that they have been trained up in wisdom's ways by this gently constraining, but most powerful and salutary influence—that to precepts founded on divine truth, from lips the most revered, they have had added example from the most influential quarter, and recurring daily and hourly. Suppose they have, by deed as well as by word, been taught to place implicit confidence in the Lord Jehovah, whose kingdom ruleth over all—and to love him who first loved us, and so loved us as to die for us—and then say whether they have not in this enjoyed a rich and lasting inheritance? I appeal to you who now hear me, who have been thus privileged, to say whether you do not feel that such has been the case with you? The parent whose pious example you followed, may be no more. The grave may have long closed over those whose footsteps ye were privileged to follow. But say whether the example left has not made a deep, I trust an indelible impression, which you fondly cherish; and whether, in the season of temptation, it does not still exert its powerful control—second in power only to the feeling thus expressed, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

But we cannot quit this part of the subject without warning you that it is one in which errors in practice, on the part of parents, greatly abound. It is too common for the young to see the duties of religion represented and discharged in a gloomy, repulsive, and austere form, as by constraint and not willingly. We regret to say that this morose temper and gloomy disposition have obtained a vast accession in our land within these few years. We regret it, because it is not in accordance with the religion of Jesus, and the glorious hopes it inspires. We regret it, because of its desolating effects in the bosoms of those that indulge it. And we regret it, because such an example has been proved by past experience, in innumerable instances, to have a direct and powerful tendency to drive children away from the duties of religion, and to make them regard them not as the source of the purest and most exalted pleasures they can enjoy on the earth, but as the source of all that is gloomy, and irksome, and distressing. If then, brethren, you would leave such an example, as will be an inheritance to your children, you must first feel the power of religion yourselves, and live under its influence, and be consistent in your conduct with the faith you profess. You must lead them with a gentle and tender hand to the footstool of the throne of God, and you must shew them that, coming there through Him who is the way, and the truth, and the life, in confidence of prayer, as a child unto his father, you taste your sweetest joys, and experience your highest consolations; and this will with them be more powerful than ten thousand

arguments, to convince them that they there come to a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; whose ear is never heavy that it cannot hear—whose arm is never shortened that it cannot save—and who is ever far more ready to bestow blessings than we are to ask —and whose unlimited invitation is, "ask and receive, that your joy may be full." Such practical training, by example, confessedly far more powerful than precept, will prove to your children a rich inheritance, and, according to the promise of God, it will descend to your children's children.

Thirdly, we observe that the good man leaveth his children an inheritance in the habitual, fervent, believing prayers, which he has addressed to the throne of grace on their behalf. In our observations, we must never lose sight of the character of the man of whom we were speaking—for they apply only to those who have passed from death to life, and are living a life of faith on the Son of God. Of him, then, we may safely say, that he is a man of prayer; and his prayers will ascend to the throne of grace, not for himself alone, but for all his brethren of mankind; and, above all, for those of them with whom he is connected by the tenderest ties. We just ask you, do you think it possible that such a parent can forget his children, when he kneels in secret, or in his family circle, or when he lifts up his supplications in the house of prayer? Is it not his habitual, his earnest, his heartfelt prayer, that they may taste of the bounty of the Lord here below—that they may be kept in all their goings—that the everlasting arms may be underneath and around them—

that they may be fitted for every duty and every trial —and, above all, that being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, they may be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom that passes not away? O yes, brethren, the good man adopts fervently Abraham's supplication, saying, "O that Ishmael may live before thee." He imitates Jacob's practice, and pours forth supplications for his children and grand-children; and, like Job, he daily sacrifices for them, lest they may have sinned and cursed God in their heart.

Do ye believe, then, that prayer is the appointed instrumental means through which blessings are conferred; and that Jehovah is the hearer and answerer of prayer; and can you hesitate one moment to admit, that there is a rich inheritance bequeathed to those who have thus, in faith, been daily committed to the great Shepherd over Israel, who alone is able to guide their inexperienced and incautious feet among the snares and temptations cast in their way?—who alone is able to protect and uphold them, amid the difficulties and trials which are the common lot of humanity? and who alone is able to make them in all things more than conquerors, through "the Beloved?" The inheritance sought for them is a heavenly one, and it is given in answer to the prayer of faith,—and we know not how the affection that warms, to the last hour, the parental bosom, can more appropriately and successfully find utterance, than in commending his children to his Father and their Father, and to his God and their God.

It is necessary, brethren, that as your children grow up, they should go forth from you into the world, to take their allotted share in its business, its temptations, and its trials. And when the time arrives that they leave you, to find a home among strangers—it may be even in a distant or foreign land, it is to you a painfully anxious season. And why is it so? The parent's heart answers the question by saying, it is painfully anxious, because his child is henceforth no longer under his own eye—because he is to be exposed, all inexperienced as he is, to the temptations and trials of a world lying in wickedness; and that too, when his passions and prejudices are in full tide,—and, because cords of nature's own twining are thus broken, and a blank created in the family circle, which can never be made up. The domestic feast comes round at the wonted day; but one seat, or it may be, many seats, are empty. The Sabbath comes round; but the family pew is thinned of its wonted occupants. The season of communion comes round; but those that used to rejoice in it together, or to ascend the hill of God together, are now far scattered; and on this side the grave there may be little, if any, prospect of their meeting again. All this, and far more than all this, is true of you and them. Your children may be widely scattered, and not have now the benefit of your watchful eye and warning voice. But of one thing they need not be deprived. They may still have the benefit of your earnest, fervent, believing prayers. You can remember them, and intercede for them, when you bow before the Lord in the assembled congregation. You can remem-

ber them, and intercede for them, when you kneel around your domestic altar, in your family devotions. You can remember them, and pour out all a parent's tenderness and anxiety for them, when in secret you approach your heavenly Father in confidence of prayer. Thus, coming in the fulness of a parent's heart to your covenant God, he will not send you empty away. He will hear and answer, in his own good time, your supplications on their behalf. The Shepherd of Israel will keep and guide them. The God of Jacob will be their refuge and portion. O, be persuaded then to seek this covenant blessing for your children, and then, go where they may, they are safe. They may never again reside under your roof; but he that keeps Israel slumbers not nor sleeps; and not a sparrow falls to the ground without him. They may be exposed to many wants, to many trials, and to many temptations, but the everlasting arms are underneath and around them, and no evil can befall them. Their remains may be committed to the grave in a far distant land, and by the hand of strangers, but of all those that the Father hath given to the Son, he will lose none, but will raise them up at the last day. O, seek then, brethren, that ye may be of those who thus leave an inheritance to their children's children.

We now go on, in the fourth place, to observe, that the inheritance a good man leaves to his children's children, consists partly in the sanctified substance he has to bequeath to them. It is right that we make you aware, that this is a part of the subject on which we do not mean to dwell, not that it is one in which you

would take no interest, but because I am addressing immortal beings, on matters in which they have an eternal interest, and thus what refers to time alone possesses comparatively very little importance indeed. We admit, brethren, that it very frequently happens, that the good man described in our text, had little of this world's goods to leave. His strict honesty and integrity have kept him from amassing wealth, by means too common among the men of the world. His liberal heart and open hand have kept him from hoarding what he has acquired, without attending to the wants of friends, and the cry of the needy. He has all along regarded himself as the steward, and not the absolute proprietor of the bounties of Providence, and he has considered what was given to the poor as lent unto the Lord, who will, unquestionably, repay it a thousand fold, either in temporal or spiritual blessings. But what then? We have the authority of the Psalmist for saying, that "the little a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." And you have but to open your eyes on the page of Revelation, or on the world around you, to see this great truth exemplified. The righteous are like trees planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth fruit in their season; their leaf withers not, and whatsoever they do shall prosper. The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. For instance, look at the wicked and hardened king of Babylon, walking in his palace, and in the pride of his heart, saying, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the

honour of my majesty?" The words, however, had scarcely passed his lips, when a voice from heaven said, "The kingdom is departed from thee." He was driven from the abodes of men, and his dwelling was with the beasts of the field, till he learned that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Or, as an exemplification, on the other hand, look to the prophet Elijah, driven by tyranny to the desert; and fed, now by ravens in the wilderness, and now by the produce of the widow's cruise of oil and handful of meal miraculously multiplied. And David has left on record this declaration, which is quite to our purpose—"I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread." Thus it is, that godliness is doubly profitable, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. Now, brethren, we already hinted at the extravagant desire too many indulge, to leave an inheritance to their children. But, according to the doctrine we are now laying down—the doctrine of God's Word—the doctrine verified by the observation and experience of every age—it is not the amount of what you leave, that makes it precious and valuable, but its connexion with the Giver of every good and perfect gift. It is what you have received of the Lord, in consequence of your covenant relation to him through his Son. It is what you have asked in the faith, and received in the hope of an infinitely richer and more enduring portion. It is only what you transmit as an earnest and pledge of the kingdom that abideth for ever, that proves an inheritance to

your children's children. Listen then to the character described in the book of God, and the promise annexed to it; say, ye parents, what the life is to which it so powerfully calls you. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth. The generation of the upright shall be blessed;" and if this will not rouse you to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, look at the declaration that follows our text—"The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just"—a declaration which you may verify by your own observation every day that you live. And this brings me to observe in the—

Fifth, and last place, that the inheritance a good man leaves to his children's children consists farther in the favour with which God has promised to regard the descendants of his servants. Perhaps it was to this chiefly that the author of our text referred; and you do not require to be told that on this point the Scriptures are very full and explicit. Look into the history of God's chosen people, and you will find, times without number, that the blessings received by them are expressly said to be conferred, not for their own sake, but for the sake of their fathers who had kept the covenant of God. For instance, when the king of Assyria was besieging Jerusalem, the Lord sent this message to Hezekiah, "I will defend this city for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake." And thus it is written—"The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." We have no desire to push this doctrine to an

unsafe extreme. We cannot penetrate into the counsels of God, or tell how he will accomplish the good purposes of his will, in this or that instance. But the fact of God's covenant promise to the children of his servants is beyond question, and the appeal thus made to parents has a double force. Ye are entreated to devote yourselves to God, and to live in his service, not only because of the glorious reward secured to you; but also because the promise is not only to you but to your children. Now, with one and all of us the day is at hand when we must leave this world, and all that are dear to us therein. And if, when the day of death was evidently approaching, any parent among you had a friend of vast power and boundless kindness, to whom he could then commit his children, with the assurance that he would take them up and provide for them; would not this afford you unspeakable comfort and consolation? And yet, alas! there are many wants that no earthly friends can supply. There are thousands of dangers that he cannot avert, and evils that he cannot cure. There is an eternity to provide for, and this his power cannot reach. And thus the deepest and most pressing source of anxiety in the parent's heart is left, even by this powerful and kind friend, absolutely untouched. The Lord Jehovah, however, has promised to be this friend to the children of his servants; for, when both father and mother forsake them, he will take them up; and there is no want that he cannot supply—no danger that he cannot avert—no evil that he cannot cure—for time and for eternity he can equally provide; for in Christ all ful-

ness dwells, and out of this fulness they shall receive. O, my friends, what a glorious prospect is here! What unbounded consolation for the hour when consolation is most needed! What a powerful motive to walk before the Lord in newness of life!

But if such be the prospects of the children of God's servants, and such his covenant promises to them, what shall we say of the prospects of the children of ungodly parents? How melancholy is their condition! What an awful inheritance is left to them, when the Lord says, I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me! They inherit no religious instruction—no pious example—no believing prayers—no sanctified substance—no covenant blessing. They have learned much, but it is only evil. They have had example, but it is one that would lead them down to the chambers of death. Instead of being taught by example and precept to pray, they have been taught to curse and to swear—to neglect, or it may be, to despise, the ordinances of God, and to profane his holy Sabbath. Instead of being led in the way everlasting, they have been led in the broad path that goes down to destruction, and that too by the father or the mother that gave them being—to whom God committed them, saying, as it were, take this child and nurse it up for me. My friends, I tremble at the thought of the very picture I am drawing; and yet it is one that stares us in the face at every corner. It is one that must meet your eye every day that you live. It is one which many of you must have mourned over with in-

describable bitterness; for, in the judgment, these children will rise up against their parents and upbraid them for the misery to which they have brought them, and thus enhance even the anguish and dismay of the pit of destruction. O think seriously of your condition and prospects, and the condition and prospects of the children that are so dear to you, all ungodly as you are; and then you will soon see that your duty is obvious, and that your path is clear. O seek, while the day of grace lasts—that grace of God that bringeth salvation. Seek, by supplication and prayer, the appointed means—that repentance that needeth not to be repented of. Forsake every false and wicked way, though the doing so may be like the plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand. Cry earnestly and perseveringly, through him whom the Father heareth always, for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace; and the God of mercy, who is still waiting to be gracious, will create you again in Christ Jesus to newness of life. The Spirit will descend to dwell richly in your heart; the slave of Satan will become the servant of God; the child of perdition will become an heir of glory; and, beyond all, your own interests in time and throughout eternity, those of your children will be promoted; and even on this side the grave ye will have the satisfaction of knowing that you leave an inheritance to your children's children. Thus—

I. Character.—II. Inheritance.—*i. e.*, Instruction—Example—Prayers—Substance—Covenant Blessing.

We now proceed, as we purposed in the *third* and last place, to offer a very brief admonition to parents

and to children, founded on the subject we have been discussing.

And first, our attention is directed to parents. We have not, you see, been at present discussing the whole of your parental duties. Our text has led us to take up only one branch of this extensive and important subject; and yet you have seen that your responsibility is great, and that your encouragement is unspeakable. But while God in his word says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;" yet for wise reasons his promises are limited to the children of those who are his servants. To secure the blessing that you and they need then, it is not enough that you go as God's people go, and sit as they sit. It is not enough, for yourselves, that you occasionally attend the house of prayer—that you, at stated times, seat yourselves at the table of communion—and that in the world you bear the Christian name. All this may, all this does in many instances, consist with the professor being in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity; and then, all this is worse than a solemn mockery; for God, with whom you have to do, cannot be mocked. Your own soul is in the utmost peril; and, through you, your children can inherit no covenant blessing; nay, quite the reverse will be found to be the case.

We have reason to fear that the notion too generally prevails, that any parent, who is a mere professor of Christianity, who at times attends its ordinances, and is not grossly immoral, has a right to present his child to God in baptism, for instance, and to expect the covenant blessing. We speak advisedly—we would wish

to speak to the heart of every parent, when we say, the word of God gives no authority for such an expectation. This is reserved exclusively for those who are the children of Jesus, not in name only, but in reality. We cannot, we dare not, as office-bearers in the church, refuse ordinances to such a professor, for we cannot read the heart; and the province of judging it God has reserved to himself. But if we could read the heart, and found there a want of faith, a want of love, a want of new obedience—if we could read the heart, and found that the applicant was a Christian in name only, and not in reality, we would not only be entitled, but bound to refuse his application. Now the God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed, does read the heart; and, with his perfect knowledge of it, is it not preposterous in the extreme to imagine, that he will give to the mere empty, insincere professor, the blessing which he has exclusively reserved for his humble, sincere, and faithful servant?

We feel deeply, and we would speak earnestly, on this subject; and we crave your attention for a very little, while we farther illustrate the matter.

Suppose any one of you had grown to maturity without being baptized. Such a one might consider himself degraded thereby; and ask, in the proper quarter, the administration of the ordinance. Suppose we knew that he had no love to God—no faith in Christ—no feeling of his need of salvation, and consequently no desire for it, his object being merely to remove the stigma he believed to rest on his name. Would we, I ask, if we knew all this, be warranted in

administering to him the ordinance of baptism? or could he be said, in any just sense, to enter into covenant with God in the ordinance? With one consent you answer, we dared not administer the ordinance, if this was known to us; and, moreover, that he could not be benefited thereby if he thus sought and obtained it.

Now, alter the supposition in a trifling matter. Admit that the ordinance was asked for his child, and not for himself. Can it be maintained that he is entitled to ask for his offspring, what he may not ask for himself? or that a blessing can be looked for in the one case more than the other? The thing is absolutely impossible. Nay, solemn and awful as the consideration is, the truth must be told. You that thus act are far more likely to entail a curse than a blessing on your offspring, for the iniquities of the fathers are often visited on the children even to the third and fourth generation.

I am quite aware, brethren, that there are many who are inclined to throw all responsibility, and as far as possible, all blame from themselves. And on this point they are inclined to say, if we do not leave an inheritance to our children's children, they are at least not the worse for us, as we must bear our own sins. And are they not the worse, that you have made vows and promises, with respect to them, which you have not kept? That you have set before them an evil, instead of a good example? That you have taught them the way of evil, instead of the way of good? Are they not the worse, that your idleness or intemperance subjects them to want; or your licentiousness to pain—

to disease—to premature death? Are they not the worse, that the consequences of one man's misconduct often run through many generations? And what happens in the natural, happens also in the moral world. No doubt the Judge of all the earth will do right. But he has connected the interests of your children, in time and throughout eternity, with your present conduct, that, whenever your bosom glows with parental tenderness, ye may feel this as an additional reason for living a life of faith on the Son of God, that thus ye may leave an inheritance to your children's children.

In conclusion, we have now a word of admonition to address to children. Those of you who are the children of pious parents, enjoy unspeakable blessings—and for these, ye can never be sufficiently thankful to God, or obedient and grateful to your parents. And this remember, that to whomsoever much is given, from them the more will be required. Let then your love to God—your faith in Christ—and your growth in grace, be in proportion to the opportunities and means you enjoy. And this bear in mind, that nothing can be a substitute for personal religion—for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Your relationship to pious parents who have walked before you in the fear of the Lord, cannot save you. This is a *means*, not an *end*. It gives, you see, many grounds to hope that ye will be followers of those, who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. but if you do not, all your opportunities and blessings will but add to your condemnation. "The last shall

be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen." "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;" while those who ought "to have been the children of the kingdom, shall be cast out into outer darkness."

Finally, let not the children of ungodly parents despair—the grace of God is free to all, and sufficient for all that come to Him—ye have been deprived of many advantages that others enjoy—those that should have been your best friends have proved your bitterest foes. But ye have in heaven a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. When father and mother forsake you he will take you up; and he can easily supply all your wants, remove all your difficulties, and fit you for every good word and work. Listen then to his invitation, and obey his call—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." And may the God of mercy and grace satisfy you early with his mercy, that ye may rejoice and be glad before him all your days.

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